

The Importance of Soils

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As I am writing this message, there is still snow on the ground with daytime temperature highs in the 40s. Farmers are getting very anxious to get in their fields. What kind of growing season will there be in the upper Midwest? Will there be a new farm bill to address the economic times affecting the soil resources? It seems there are a lot of uncertainties in today's living environment.

One environmental element for sure is certain, and that is the importance of the soil resource. It is becoming more and more evident as this country, and even the world, is trying to raise productivity on plantable and harvestable soils. Cultures are trying to maintain themselves by raising more and more food stuffs and energy on a finite resource, our soils. There is not a better time than now for us in the soils arena to sell our message and product, the importance of soil in the environment. Maintaining, and in some cases, restoring soil quality and health should be our professional goal as we live and work in our own part of the world.

The plan for the MN Association of Professional Soil Scientists (MAPSS) summer tour is to get down to the basics of soil properties and morphology in the field and plans are also being made for a MAPSS sponsored soils workshop this fall in Southwest Minnesota. These workshops will provide a venue for soil scientists to extend training and soils information to employees of Local Units of Government (LGU) and others charged with reviewing and verifying SSTS soil reports.

In closing, I want to reemphasize the importance of wise use of our soils resource. Whether it is within the framework of cultivating for foodstuffs, cellulosic biomass energy production, or housing development siting, land use decisions must contain a soils component. It is our responsibility to make sure that happens. Everything comes down to soil. It is the common denominator for so many issues. That is why I got into the business of soils 34 years ago.