

Physical Soil Properties

This table shows estimates of some physical characteristics and features that affect soil behavior. These estimates are given for the layers of each soil in the survey area. The estimates are based on field observations and on test data for these and similar soils.

Depth to the upper and lower boundaries of each layer is indicated.

Particle size is the effective diameter of a soil particle as measured by sedimentation, sieving, or micrometric methods. Particle sizes are expressed as classes with specific effective diameter class limits. The broad classes are sand, silt, and clay, ranging from the larger to the smaller.

Sand as a soil separate consists of mineral soil particles that are 0.05 millimeter to 2 millimeters in diameter. In this table, the estimated sand content of each soil layer is given as a percentage, by weight, of the soil material that is less than 2 millimeters in diameter.

Silt as a soil separate consists of mineral soil particles that are 0.002 to 0.05 millimeter in diameter. In this table, the estimated silt content of each soil layer is given as a percentage, by weight, of the soil material that is less than 2 millimeters in diameter.

Clay as a soil separate consists of mineral soil particles that are less than 0.002 millimeter in diameter. In this table, the estimated clay content of each soil layer is given as a percentage, by weight, of the soil material that is less than 2 millimeters in diameter.

The content of sand, silt, and clay affects the physical behavior of a soil. Particle size is important for engineering and agronomic interpretations, for determination of soil hydrologic qualities, and for soil classification.

The amount and kind of clay affect the fertility and physical condition of the soil and the ability of the soil to adsorb cations and to retain moisture. They influence shrink-swell potential, saturated hydraulic conductivity (*K_{sat}*), plasticity, the ease of soil dispersion, and other soil properties. The amount and kind of clay in a soil also affect tillage and earthmoving operations.

Moist bulk density is the weight of soil (oven-dry) per unit volume. Volume is measured when the soil is at field moisture capacity, that is, the moisture content at 1/3- or 1/10-bar (33kPa or 10kPa) moisture tension. Weight is determined after the soil is dried at 105 degrees C. In the table, the estimated moist bulk density of each soil horizon is expressed in grams per cubic centimeter of soil material that is less than 2 millimeters in diameter. Bulk density data are used to compute linear extensibility, shrink-swell potential, available water capacity, total pore space, and other soil properties. The moist bulk density of a soil indicates the pore space available for water and roots. Depending on soil texture, a bulk density of more than 1.4 can restrict water storage and root penetration. Moist bulk density is influenced by texture, kind of clay, content of organic matter, and soil structure.

Saturated hydraulic conductivity (K_{sat}) refers to the ease with which pores in a saturated soil transmit water. The estimates in the table are expressed in terms of micrometers per second. They are based on soil characteristics observed in the field, particularly structure, porosity, and texture. Saturated hydraulic conductivity (*K_{sat}*) is considered in the design of soil drainage systems and septic tank absorption fields.

Available water capacity refers to the quantity of water that the soil is capable of storing for use by plants. The capacity for water storage is given in inches of water per inch of soil for each soil layer. The capacity varies, depending on soil properties that affect retention of water. The most important properties are the content of organic matter, soil texture, bulk density, and soil structure. Available water capacity is an important factor in the choice of plants or crops to be grown and in the design and management of irrigation systems. Available water capacity is not an estimate of the quantity of water actually available to plants at any given time.

Linear extensibility refers to the change in length of an unconfined clod as moisture content is decreased from a moist to a dry state. It is an expression of the volume change between the water content of the clod at 1/3- or 1/10-bar tension (33kPa or 10kPa tension) and oven dryness. The volume change is reported in the table as percent change for the whole soil. The amount and type of clay minerals in the soil influence volume change.

Linear extensibility is used to determine the shrink-swell potential of soils. The shrink-swell potential is low if the soil has a linear extensibility of less than 3 percent; moderate if 3 to 6 percent; high if 6 to 9 percent; and very high if more than 9 percent. If the linear extensibility is more than 3, shrinking and swelling can cause damage to buildings, roads, and other structures and to plant roots. Special design commonly is needed.

Organic matter is the plant and animal residue in the soil at various stages of decomposition. In this table, the estimated content of organic matter is expressed as a percentage, by weight, of the soil material that is less than 2 millimeters in diameter. The content of organic matter in a soil can be maintained by returning crop residue to the soil.

Organic matter has a positive effect on available water capacity, water infiltration, soil organism activity, and tilth. It is a source of nitrogen and other nutrients for crops and soil organisms.

Erosion factors are shown in the table as the K factor (K_w and K_f) and the T factor. Erosion factor K indicates the susceptibility of a soil to sheet and rill erosion by water. Factor K is one of six factors used in the Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE) and the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE) to predict the average annual rate of soil loss by sheet and rill erosion in tons per acre per year. The estimates are based primarily on percentage of silt, sand, and organic matter and on soil structure and K_{sat} . Values of K range from 0.02 to 0.69. Other factors being equal, the higher the value, the more susceptible the soil is to sheet and rill erosion by water.

Erosion factor K_w indicates the erodibility of the whole soil. The estimates are modified by the presence of rock fragments.

Erosion factor K_f indicates the erodibility of the fine-earth fraction, or the material less than 2 millimeters in size.

Erosion factor T is an estimate of the maximum average annual rate of soil erosion by wind and/or water that can occur without affecting crop productivity over a sustained period. The rate is in tons per acre per year.

Wind erodibility groups are made up of soils that have similar properties affecting their susceptibility to wind erosion in cultivated areas. The soils assigned to group 1 are the most susceptible to wind erosion, and those assigned to group 8 are the least susceptible. The groups are described in the "National Soil Survey Handbook."

Wind erodibility index is a numerical value indicating the susceptibility of soil to wind erosion, or the tons per acre per year that can be expected to be lost to wind erosion. There is a close correlation between wind erosion and the texture of the surface layer, the size and durability of surface clods, rock fragments, organic matter, and a calcareous reaction. Soil moisture and frozen soil layers also influence wind erosion.

Reference:

United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service.
National soil survey handbook, title 430-VI. (<http://soils.usda.gov>)

Report—Physical Soil Properties

Physical Soil Properties– Jefferson County, Idaho														
Map symbol and soil name	Depth	Sand	Silt	Clay	Moist bulk density	Saturated hydraulic conductivity	Available water capacity	Linear extensibility	Organic matter	Erosion factors			Wind erodibility group	Wind erodibility index
										Kw	Kf	T		
	<i>In</i>	<i>Pct</i>	<i>Pct</i>	<i>Pct</i>	<i>g/cc</i>	<i>micro m/sec</i>	<i>In/In</i>	<i>Pct</i>	<i>Pct</i>					
13— Bereniceton- Rock outcrop- Aecet complex														
Bereniceton	0-3	—	—	5-15	1.30-1.50	14.11-42.34	0.11-0.13	0.0-2.9	0.5-1.0	.17	.24	3	3	86
	3-14	—	—	18-25	1.20-1.40	4.00-14.11	0.16-0.18	0.0-2.9	0.5-1.0	.28	.28			
	14-46	—	—	28-35	1.30-1.50	1.41-4.23	0.19-0.21	3.0-5.9	0.0-0.5	.20	.20			
	46-56	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—					
Aecet	0-5	—	—	5-15	1.60-1.70	14.11-42.34	0.11-0.13	0.0-2.9	0.5-1.0	.17	.28	2	6	48
	5-13	—	—	18-35	1.40-1.50	1.41-4.23	0.19-0.21	3.0-5.9	0.0-0.5	.20	.20			
	13-23	—	—	18-35	1.40-1.50	1.41-4.23	0.10-0.21	3.0-5.9	0.0-0.5	.20	.32			
	23-33	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—					
Rock outcrop	0-60	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—					
113—Terreton- Bereniceton complex														
Terreton	0-6	—	—	28-40	1.40-1.55	1.41-4.23	0.16-0.19	3.0-5.9	0.5-1.0	.37	.37	5	4L	86
	6-31	—	—	40-55	1.40-1.50	0.42-1.41	0.14-0.16	6.0-8.9	0.0-0.5	.20	.20			
	31-51	—	—	28-40	1.35-1.50	1.41-4.23	0.19-0.21	3.0-5.9	0.0-0.5	.32	.32			
	51-60	—	—	40-55	1.40-1.55	0.42-1.41	0.14-0.16	6.0-8.9	0.0-0.5	.20	.20			
Bereniceton	0-3	—	—	5-15	1.30-1.50	14.11-42.34	0.11-0.13	0.0-2.9	0.5-1.0	.17	.24	3	4L	86
	3-14	—	—	18-25	1.20-1.40	4.00-14.11	0.16-0.18	0.0-2.9	0.5-1.0	.28	.28			
	14-46	—	—	28-35	1.30-1.50	1.41-4.23	0.19-0.21	3.0-5.9	0.0-0.5	.20	.20			
	46-56	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—					

Data Source Information

Soil Survey Area: Jefferson County, Idaho
Survey Area Data: Version 7, Jan 24, 2008

