U.S. Land Use and Soil Classification

NRCS NRI 2007 Land Uses for 48 States (1.9 Billion Acres)

Federally Owned	21%
Cropland	18%
CRP	2%
Pasture	6%
Rangeland	21%
Forest	21%
Developed	6%
Water	3%
Other	2%

NRCS Soils Classification

Class I (1) soils have slight limitations that restrict their use.

Class II (2) soils have moderate limitations that reduce the choice of plants or require moderate conservation practices.

Class III (3) soils have severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants or require special conservation practices, or both.

Class IV (4) soils have very severe limitations that restrict the choice of plants or require very careful management, or both.

Class V (5) soils have little or no hazard of erosion but have other limitations, impractical to remove, that limit their use mainly to pasture, range, forestland, or wildlife food and cover.

Class VI (6) soils have severe limitations that make them generally unsuited to cultivation and that limit their use mainly to pasture, range, forestland, or wildlife food and cover.

Class VII (7) soils have very severe limitations that make them unsuited to cultivation and that restrict their use mainly to grazing, forestland, or wildlife.

Class VIII (8) soils and miscellaneous areas have limitations that preclude their use for commercial plant production and limit their use to recreation, wildlife, or water supply or for esthetic purposes.

Subclasses and Definitions

Subclass e is made up of soils for which the susceptibility to erosion is the dominant problem or hazard affecting their use. Erosion susceptibility and past erosion damage are the major soil factors that affect soils in this subclass.

Subclass w is made up of soils for which excess water is the dominant hazard or limitation affecting their use. Poor soil drainage, wetness, a high water table, and overflow are the factors that affect soils in this subclass.

Subclass s is made up of soils that have soil limitations within the rooting zone, such as shallowness of the rooting zone, stones, low moisture-holding capacity, low fertility that is difficult to correct, and salinity or sodium content.

Subclass c is made up of soils for which the climate (the temperature or lack of moisture) is the major hazard or limitation affecting their use

% Distribution of Land Classes by Location

Location	I & II	III	IV	VI	VII & VIII
U.S.	23	21	14	19	23
IL	63	22	6	6	3
FL	7	30	32	8	23
GA	35	22	18	14	11
NM	1	5	10	36	48

Prime Farmland:
Land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is also available for these uses. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce economically sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, including water management. In general, prime farmlands have an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks. They are permeable to water and air. Prime farmlands are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time, and they either do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding. [SSM, USDA Handbook No. 18, October 1993]

Uses of Prime Farmland in 1997 (332 million acres)

Croplands	64%
Pasture	11%
Rangeland	6%
Forest	14%
Other	5%

Lands Grazed by Livestock or Hayed in Lower 48 States (NASS, ERS)

Private Pasture, Rangeland, Grazed Woodlands	395 million acres
Cropland Used Only for Pasture	61 million acres
Hay Land	60 million acres
BLM & FS Grazing Allotments	258 million acres
TOTAL	774 million acres