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Agriculture

Natural Resources  
Conservation Service

In cooperation with  
The Pennsylvania State University, College of  
Agricultural Sciences

The Pennsylvania Department of  
Environmental Resources

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

The Bucks County Conservation District

# Soil Survey of Bucks County, Pennsylvania

## An Electronic Report

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This soil survey is a publication of the National Cooperative Soil Survey, a joint effort of the United States Department of Agriculture and other Federal agencies, State agencies including the Agricultural Experiment Stations, and local agencies. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has leadership for the Federal part of the National Cooperative Soil Survey.

Major fieldwork for this soil survey was completed in 1994. Soil names and descriptions were approved in 1996. Unless otherwise indicated, statements in this publication refer to conditions in the survey area in 1994. This survey was made cooperatively by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the United States Department of Agriculture; the Pennsylvania State University, College of Agriculture; the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (formerly the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources; the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture; and the Bucks County Conservation District. It is part of the technical assistance furnished to the Bucks County Conservation District.

Soil maps in this survey may be copied without permission. Enlargement of these maps, however, could cause misunderstanding of the detail of mapping. If enlarged, maps do not show the small areas of contrasting soils that could have been shown at a larger scale.

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# Foreword

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This soil survey contains information that can be used in land-planning programs in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. It contains predictions of soil behavior for selected land uses. The survey also highlights limitations and hazards inherent in the soil, improvements needed to overcome the limitations, and the impact of selected land uses on the environment.

This soil survey is designed for many different users. Farmers, ranchers, foresters, and agronomists can use it to evaluate the potential of the soil and the management needed for maximum food and fiber production. Planners, community officials, engineers, developers, builders, and home buyers can use the survey to plan land use, select sites for construction, and identify special practices needed to ensure proper performance. Conservationists, teachers, students, and specialists in recreation, wildlife management, waste disposal, and pollution control can use the survey to help them understand, protect, and enhance the environment.

Great differences in soil properties can occur within short distances. Some soils are seasonally wet or subject to flooding. Some are shallow to bedrock. Some are too unstable to be used as a foundation for buildings or roads. Clayey or wet soils are poorly suited to use as septic tank absorption fields. A high water table makes a soil poorly suited to basements or underground installations.

These and many other soil properties that affect land use are described in this soil survey. Broad areas of soils are shown on the general soil map. The location of each soil is shown on the detailed soil maps. Each soil in the survey area is described. Information on specific uses is given for each soil. Help in using this publication and additional information are available at the local office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bucks County Conservation District, or the Cooperative Extension Service.

ROBIN E. HEARD  
State Conservationist  
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# Soil Survey of Bucks County, Pennsylvania

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By  
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County Conservation District.

## How This Survey Was Made

This survey was made to provide information about the soils and miscellaneous areas in the survey area. The information includes a description of the soils and miscellaneous areas and their location and a discussion of their suitability, limitations, and management for specified uses. A previous soil survey for Bucks and Philadelphia Counties, Pennsylvania was published in July 1975 by the United States Department of Agriculture (1). This survey updates the 1975 soil survey. It contains updated soil delineations on orthophotographs, more detailed map unit descriptions, and additional and updated interpretive information. Soil scientists observed the steepness, length, and shape of the slopes; the general pattern of drainage; the kinds of crops and native plants; and the kinds of bedrock. They dug many holes to study the soil profile, which is the sequence of natural layers, or horizons, in a soil. The profile extends from the surface down into the material in which the soil formed. The material is devoid of roots and other living organisms and has not been changed by other biological activity.

The soils and miscellaneous areas in the survey area are in an orderly pattern that is related to the geology, landforms, climate, and natural vegetation of the area. Each kind of soil and miscellaneous area is associated with a particular kind or segment of the landscape. By observing the soils and miscellaneous areas in the survey area and relating their position to specific segments of the landscape, soil scientists develop a concept, or model, of how the soils were formed. Thus, during mapping, this model enables the soil scientists to predict with a considerable degree of accuracy the kind of soil or miscellaneous area at a specific location on the landscape.

Individual soils on the landscape commonly merge into one another as their characteristics gradually change. To construct an accurate map, however, soil scientists must determine the boundaries between the soils. They can observe only a limited number of soil profiles. Nevertheless, these observations, supplemented by an understanding of the soil-vegetation-landscape relationship, are sufficient to verify predictions of the kinds of soil in an area and to determine the boundaries.

Soil scientists recorded the characteristics of the soil profiles that they studied. They noted color, texture, size, and shape of soil aggregates, kind and amount of rock fragments, distribution of plant roots, soil reaction, and other features that enable them to identify soils. After describing the soils in the survey area and determining their properties, the soil scientists assigned the soils to taxonomic classes

(units). Taxonomic classes are concepts. Each taxonomic class has a set of soil characteristics with precisely defined limits. The classes are used as a basis for comparison to classify soils systematically. Soil taxonomy, the system of taxonomic classification used in the United States, is based mainly on the kind and character of soil properties and the arrangement of horizons within the profile. After the soil scientists classified and named the soils in the survey area, they compared the individual soils with similar soils in the same taxonomic class in other areas so that they could confirm data and assemble additional data based on experience and research.

While a soil survey is in progress, samples of some of the soils in the area generally are collected for laboratory analyses and for engineering tests. Soil scientists interpret the data from these analyses and tests as well as the field-observed characteristics and the soil properties to determine the expected behavior of the soils under different uses. Interpretations for all of the soils are field tested through observation of the soils in different uses and under different levels of management. Some interpretations are modified to fit local conditions, and some new interpretations are developed to meet local needs. Data are assembled from other sources, such as research information, production records, and field experience of specialists.

Predictions about soil behavior are based not only on soil properties but also on such variables as climate and biological activity. Soil conditions are predictable over long periods of time, but they are not predictable from year to year. For example, soil scientists can predict with a fairly high degree of accuracy that a given soil will have a high water table within certain depths in most years, but they cannot predict that a high water table will always be at a specific level in the soil on a specific date.

After soil scientists located and identified the significant natural bodies of soil in the survey area, they drew the boundaries of these bodies on aerial photographs and identified each as a specific map unit. Aerial photographs show trees, fields, roads, and rivers, all of which help in locating boundaries accurately.

The descriptions, names, and delineations of the soils in this survey area do not fully agree with those of the soils in adjacent survey areas. Differences are the result of a better knowledge of soils, modifications in series concepts, or variations in the intensity of mapping or in the extent of the soils in the survey area.