

Map Unit Description

The map units delineated on the detailed soil maps in a soil survey represent the soils or miscellaneous areas in the survey area. The map unit descriptions in this report, along with the maps, can be used to determine the composition and properties of a unit.

A map unit delineation on a soil map represents an area dominated by one or more major kinds of soil or miscellaneous areas. A map unit is identified and named according to the taxonomic classification of the dominant soils. Within a taxonomic class there are precisely defined limits for the properties of the soils. On the landscape, however, the soils are natural phenomena, and they have the characteristic variability of all natural phenomena. Thus, the range of some observed properties may extend beyond the limits defined for a taxonomic class. Areas of soils of a single taxonomic class rarely, if ever, can be mapped without including areas of other taxonomic classes. Consequently, every map unit is made up of the soils or miscellaneous areas for which it is named and some minor components that belong to taxonomic classes other than those of the major soils.

Most minor soils have properties similar to those of the dominant soil or soils in the map unit, and thus they do not affect use and management. These are called noncontrasting, or similar, components. They may or may not be mentioned in a particular map unit description. Other minor components, however, have properties and behavioral characteristics divergent enough to affect use or to require different management. These are called contrasting, or dissimilar, components. They generally are in small areas and could not be mapped separately because of the scale used. Some small areas of strongly contrasting soils or miscellaneous areas are identified by a special symbol on the maps. If included in the database for a given area, the contrasting minor components are identified in the map unit descriptions along with some characteristics of each. A few areas of minor components may not have been observed, and consequently they are not mentioned in the descriptions, especially where the pattern was so complex that it was impractical to make enough observations to identify all the soils and miscellaneous areas on the landscape.

The presence of minor components in a map unit in no way diminishes the usefulness or accuracy of the data. The objective of mapping is not to delineate pure taxonomic classes but rather to separate the landscape into landforms or landform segments that have similar use and management requirements. The delineation of such segments on the map provides sufficient information for the development of resource plans. If intensive use of small areas is planned, however, onsite investigation is needed to define and locate the soils and miscellaneous areas.

An identifying symbol precedes the map unit name in the map unit descriptions. Each description includes general facts about the unit and gives important soil properties and qualities.

Soils that have profiles that are almost alike make up a *soil series*. All the soils of a series have major horizons that are similar in composition, thickness, and arrangement. Soils of a given series can differ in texture of the surface layer, slope, stoniness, salinity, degree of erosion, and other characteristics that affect their use. On the basis of such differences, a soil series is divided into *soil phases*. Most of the areas shown on the detailed soil maps are phases of soil series. The name of a soil phase commonly indicates a feature that affects use or management. For example, Alpha silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, is a phase of the Alpha series.

Some map units are made up of two or more major soils or miscellaneous areas. These map units are complexes, associations, or undifferentiated groups.

A *complex* consists of two or more soils or miscellaneous areas in such an intricate pattern or in such small areas that they cannot be shown separately on the maps. The pattern and proportion of the soils or miscellaneous areas are somewhat similar in all areas. Alpha-Beta complex, 0 to 6 percent slopes, is an example.

An *association* is made up of two or more geographically associated soils or miscellaneous areas that are shown as one unit on the maps. Because of present or anticipated uses of the map units in the survey area, it was not considered practical or necessary to map the soils or miscellaneous areas separately. The pattern and relative proportion of the soils or miscellaneous areas are somewhat similar. Alpha-Beta association, 0 to 2 percent slopes, is an example.

An *undifferentiated group* is made up of two or more soils or miscellaneous areas that could be mapped individually but are mapped as one unit because similar interpretations can be made for use and management. The pattern and proportion of the soils or miscellaneous areas in a mapped area are not uniform. An area can be made up of only one of the major soils or miscellaneous areas, or it can be made up of all of them. Alpha and Beta soils, 0 to 2 percent slopes, is an example.

Some surveys include *miscellaneous areas*. Such areas have little or no soil material and support little or no vegetation. Rock outcrop is an example.

Additional information about the map units described in this report is available in other soil reports, which give properties of the soils and the limitations, capabilities, and potentials for many uses. Also, the narratives that accompany the soil reports define some of the properties included in the map unit descriptions.

La Plata County Area, Colorado

81—Zyme clay loam, 3 to 25 percent slopes

Map Unit Setting

National map unit symbol: 1yq4

Elevation: 6,000 to 7,000 feet

Mean annual precipitation: 14 to 18 inches

Mean annual air temperature: 45 to 50 degrees F

Frost-free period: 110 to 130 days

Farmland classification: Not prime farmland

Map Unit Composition

Zyme and similar soils: 70 percent

Estimates are based on observations, descriptions, and transects of the mapunit.

Description of Zyme

Setting

Landform: Hills, ridges

Landform position (three-dimensional): Base slope, side slope, crest

Down-slope shape: Linear

Across-slope shape: Linear

Parent material: Residuum weathered from shale

Typical profile

H1 - 0 to 4 inches: clay loam

H2 - 4 to 10 inches: clay loam, clay, silty clay loam

H2 - 4 to 10 inches: weathered bedrock

H2 - 4 to 10 inches:

H3 - 10 to 14 inches:

Properties and qualities

Slope: 3 to 25 percent

Depth to restrictive feature: 6 to 20 inches to paralithic bedrock

Natural drainage class: Well drained

Runoff class: High

Capacity of the most limiting layer to transmit water (Ksat):

Moderately low to moderately high (0.06 to 0.20 in/hr)

Depth to water table: More than 80 inches

Frequency of flooding: None

Frequency of ponding: None

Calcium carbonate, maximum in profile: 10 percent

Salinity, maximum in profile: Nonsaline (0.0 to 2.0 mmhos/cm)

Available water storage in profile: Low (about 3.7 inches)

Interpretive groups

Land capability classification (irrigated): None specified

Land capability classification (nonirrigated): 6e

Hydrologic Soil Group: D

Ecological site: Pinus edulis-juniperus osteosperma/artemisida

tridentata ssp. vaseyana-cercocarpus montanus/poa

fendleriana-pleuraphis jamesii (F036XY907CO)

Data Source Information

Soil Survey Area: La Plata County Area, Colorado

Survey Area Data: Version 12, Sep 22, 2014