

LAND CLASSIFICATION  
IN THE  
UNITED STATES.

NATIONAL RESOURCES' PLANNING  
BOARD . LAND COMMITTEE

1941

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**LAND CLASSIFICATION  
IN THE  
UNITED STATES**

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**MARCH 1941**

**NATIONAL RESOURCES PLANNING BOARD**

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IN THE  
UNITED STATES**

**REPORT OF THE  
LAND COMMITTEE  
TO THE  
NATIONAL RESOURCES PLANNING BOARD**

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**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
NATIONAL RESOURCES PLANNING BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D. C.**

*December 20, 1940.*

**THE PRESIDENT,**  
*The White House.*

**MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:**

We take pleasure in transmitting herewith the report on Rural Land Classification, prepared by the Land Classification Subcommittee of the Board's Land Committee. This report includes (1) a comprehensive exposition of the status, methods, and geographic coverage of land classification in the United States, (2) an interpretation made from this information, indicating the importance of certain characteristics common to all land-classification work; and (3) a list of general and specific recommendations directed to scientists, administrators, and land-planning technicians.

This report represents an important step in the development of land-planning techniques and thus a significant contribution to sound land-use planning. Dissemination of the findings of this report will, we believe, be of distinct value to all those who are concerned with problems of land utilization and land planning.

Respectfully submitted,

**FREDERIC A. DELANO**  
*Chairman*  
**CHARLES E. MERRIAM**  
**GEORGE F. YANTIS**

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# LAND CLASSIFICATION IN THE UNITED STATES

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
NATIONAL RESOURCES PLANNING BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

October 7, 1940

MR. FREDERIC A. DELANO, *Chairman,*  
*National Resources Planning Board,*  
*Washington, D. C.*

DEAR MR. DELANO:

The Land Committee submits herewith a report on Rural Land Classification in the United States. The inquiry on which the report is based was initiated in January of 1939. It emphasized a four-point question in regard to land-classification work, namely, what techniques are being employed, in what areas, for what purposes and with what results. In addition, the inquiry gave much attention to the form in which the results appear. Subsequently, the returns from this broad inquiry were tabulated and analyzed to bring out both their practical and scientific values.

The report is the first comprehensive exposition of the status, techniques, methods, and areal coverage of land classification in this country. It gives both chronological and areal perspective in this highly technical field. In addition, it points out for the first time the existence of five distinct types of land classification. The recognition of these types should do much to define and clarify the field of action of land classification, to bring about agreement in its terminology, and to broaden and intensify its usefulness in the solution of land-use problems and in the development of land-use programs.

In its exposition, the report points out the notable progress in land-classification techniques in recent years, and shows that the use of aerial photographs and mosaics as bases for recording field data has led to greater accuracy and speed in land-classification work.

The report deals with both general and specific considerations: pointing out gaps in our knowledge of land resources; indicating useful directions in which land-classification activities can be expanded; and evaluating the techniques by which and the channels through which land-use adjustment recommendations, implicit in certain classifications, can be carried out. Although the present report is confined to a discussion of rural land classification, the Land Committee recommends that a companion study of urban land classification be made.

The inquiry was made and the report prepared by a Subcommittee of four, with Charles C. Colby, a member of the Land Committee, as Chairman. Dr. C. P. Barnes, of the Department of Agriculture, and Mr. J. F. Deeds, of the Department of the Interior, were designated to represent the land-classification activities of their respective departments. The fourth member of the Subcommittee, Professor G. Donald Hudson, of Northwestern University and, until recently, Chief of the Land Planning Division of the Tennessee Valley Authority, cooperated with Professor Colby in planning the inquiry and in analyzing the tabulated results. The Subcommittee was fortunate in having as consultants, Professor K. C. McMurry, Chairman of the Department of Geography at the University of Michigan, and Dr. A. B. Lewis, Senior Agricultural Economist of the Farm Credit Administration. Throughout its deliberations, moreover, the Subcommittee enjoyed the interested and able cooperation of men from many Federal and State agencies and from other specialists in the field of land classification.

The Land Committee regards this report on land classification with enthusiasm both as an important step in the development and evaluation of land-planning techniques and as a vital part of sound land-use planning. We believe that its findings will be of value to technicians, administrators, and others in the broad field of land utilization and land planning.

Respectfully submitted,

THE LAND COMMITTEE

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