



Should there be a “Wet” Soil Order in *Soil Taxonomy*?

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Early soil classification systems recognized wet soils at the highest categorical level. Among the Intrazonal Soils of the US classification utilized between the 1920s and 1960, were included as Great Soil Groups, the Wiesenboden, Bog, Half-Bog, Ground-Water Podzols and Ground-Water Laterites. In other systems, groups named with such terms as ground water gley and pseudogley were also used. With the advent of *Soil Taxonomy* and its precursor (1960, 1975), Histosols (organic soils) were distinguished as one of the initial 10 soil orders, and while many of these organic soils are wet soils, some are not (Folists for example). Thus, for over 50 years, with the exception of Histosols, wet soils (which typically represent the wettest end of subaerial wet soils) have not been collectively recognized within taxa at the highest categorical level (order) in the US soil classification system. Rather, the wettest soils were designated at the second categorical level as wet (Aqu) suborders among the various soil orders, and more recently, subaqueous soils as “Wass” suborders of Entisols and Histosols. Soils with less-wet conditions have been recognized at the subgroup (4th) level. Further, in impoundments and regions of transgressing coastlines, submerged upland soils have been found that still classify in soil orders that do not accommodate subaqueous soils (“Wass” suborders). Notwithstanding, other contemporary soil classification systems do (have continued to) recognize wet soils at the highest level. In the World Reference Base (WRB) for example, wet soils are designated as Gleysols or Stagnosols. As efforts are underway to revisit, simplify, and revise *Soil Taxonomy*, questions have been raised regarding whether wet soils should again be moved back with a place among taxa at the highest category using a name such as Hydrasols, Aquasols, etc. This paper will explore and consider the questions and arguments for and against such proposals and the difficult question regarding where along the soil wetness continuum would be the best point for recognizing a wet soil order.