
CHAPTER:

AG LAND VALUATION

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SECTION II

AGRICULTURAL LAND GRADE DEFINITIONS

1. Agricultural/Horticultural Land Grades

The following are definitions of the agricultural and horticultural eight (8) grades as published by the State Tax Commission.

A. GRADE 1

This is prime agricultural land. The condition of the soils is highly favorable with no limitations that restrict their use. Soils are deep, nearly level (zero to two percent (0-2%) slope), or gently sloping with low erosion hazard and not subject to damaging overflow. Soils that are consistently wet and poorly drained are not placed in Grade 1. They are easily worked and produce dependable crop yields with ordinary management practices to maintain productivity - both soil fertility and soil structure. They are adapted to a wide variety of crops and suited for intensive cropping.

PI Range: 93-100

B. GRADE 2

These soils are less desirable in one (1) or more respects than Grade 1 and require careful soil management, including some conservation practices on uplands to prevent deterioration. This grade has a wide range of soils and minimum slopes (mostly zero to five percent (0-5%)) that result in less choice of either crops or management practices. Primarily bottomland and best upland soils.

Limitations:

1. Low to moderate susceptibility to erosion;
2. Rare damaging overflows (once in five to ten (5-10) years); and
3. Wetness correctable by drainage.

PI Range: 86-92

C. GRADE 3

Soils have more restrictions than Grade 2. They require good management for best results. Conservation practices are generally more difficult to apply and maintain. Primarily good upland and some bottomland with medium productivity.

Limitations:

1. Gentle slope (two to seven percent (2-7%));
2. Moderate susceptibility to erosion;
3. Occasional damaging overflow (once in three to five (3-5) years) of Grades 1 and 2 bottomland; and
4. Some bottomland soils have slow permeability and/or poor drainage.

PI Range: 76-85

D. GRADE 4

Soils have moderate limitations to cropping that generally require good conservation practices. Crop rotation normally includes some small grain (for example, wheat or oats) and/or hay. Soils have moderately rolling slopes and show evidence of serious erosion.

Limitations:

1. Moderate slope (four to ten percent (4-10%));
2. Grade 1 bottomland subject to frequent damaging flooding (more often than once in two (2) years), or Grades 2 and 3 bottomland subject to occasional damaging flooding (once every three to five (3-5) years);
3. Poor drainage in some cases; and
4. Shallow soils, possibly with claypan or hardpan.

PI Range: 66-75

E. GRADE 5

Soils are not suited to continuous cultivation. Crop rotations contain increasing proportions of small grain (for example, wheat or oats) and/or hay. Upland soils have moderate to steep slopes and require conservation practices.

Limitations:

1. Moderate to steep slopes (eight to twenty percent (8-20%));
2. Grades 2 and 3 bottomland subject to frequent damaging flooding (more than once in two

(2) years) and Grade 4 bottomland subject to occasional damaging flooding; and

3. Serious drainage problems for some soils.

PI Range: 56-65

F. GRADE 6

Soils are generally unsuited for cultivation and are limited largely to pasture and sparse woodland.

Limitations:

1. Moderate to steep slopes (eight to twenty percent (8-20%));
2. Severe erosion hazards present;
3. Grades 3 and 4 bottomland subject to frequent damaging flooding (more than once in two (2) years), and Grade 5 bottomland subject to occasional damaging flooding (once every three to five (3-5) years); and
4. Requires intensive management for crops.

PI Range: 40-55

G. GRADE 7

These soils are generally unsuited for cultivation and may have other severe limitations for grazing and forestry that cannot be corrected.

Limitation:

1. Very steep slopes (over fifteen percent (15%));
2. Severe erosion potential;
3. Grades 5 and 6 bottomland subject to frequent damaging flooding (more than once in two (2) years);
4. Requires intensive management to achieve grass or timber production; and
5. Very shallow topsoil.

PI Range: 15-39

H. GRADE 8

Land capable of only limited production of plant growth. It may be extremely dry, rough, steep, stony, sandy, wet or severely eroded. Includes rivers, running branches, dry creek and swamp areas. Such lands do provide areas of benefit for wildlife or recreational purposes.

PI Range: 0-14

I. Definitions

The following are definitions of flooding:

(1) Occasional damaging flooding

Flooding of bottomland that is so infrequent that producing normal row crops is not compromised in most years.

(2) Frequent damaging flooding

Flooding of bottomlands that is so frequent that normal row cropping is affected (reduces row crop selection).

(3) Damaging flooding

A damaging flood is one that limits or affects crop production in one or more of the following ways:

- Erosion of the soil;
- Reduced yields due to plant damage caused by standing or flowing water;
- Reduced crop selection due to extended delays in planting and harvesting; and
- Soil damage caused by sand and rock being deposited on the land by flood waters.

2. Forest Land and Horticultural Land

The following prescribes special rules as to the treatment of forest land and horticultural land.

A. Adjustment for Forest/Woodlands

Forest land, whose cover is predominantly trees and other woody vegetation, should not be assigned to a land classification grade based on its productivity for agricultural crops. Forest land of two or more acres in area, which if cleared and used for agricultural crops, would fall into land grades 1 through 5 should be placed in land grade 6; or if such land would fall into land grades 6 or 7, it should be placed in land grade 7. Forest land may or may not be in use for timber production, wildlife management, hunting, other outdoor recreation, or similar uses.

B. Horticultural Use

Land utilized for the production of horticultural crops should be assigned to a land classification grade based on the productivity of the land as if used for agricultural crops. Horticultural crops include fruits, ornamental trees and shrubs, flowers, vegetables, nuts, Christmas trees and similar crops which are produced in orchards, nurseries, gardens or cleared fields.

C. Other Additional Information**(1) Levees**

If the levee is restricted, such as a United States Corp of Engineers levee along the Mississippi, they are grade 7 because they have restricted use. These generally have sand cores. If the levee is a private levee that does not have restrictions, it is grade 6 because it could have hay taken off or cattle grazing on it.

(2) Man made ponds/lakes/sink holes

Ponds, lakes, etc. should be graded in accordance with the land around it.

(3) Land Subject to Conservation Easement

This is land that is subject to a U.S. Fish and Wildlife conservation easement and is restricted in its use. Under the easement restrictions, the land cannot be used to produce any agricultural or horticultural product and may only be used for hunting purposes.

Section 137.016.3 states that all real property which is vacant, unused, or held for future use for which the determination as to its classification cannot be made under the definition set out in subsection 1 of that section, shall be classified according to its immediate most suitable economic use. In determining its immediate most suitable economic use, the subsection lists eight (8) points to consider: (1) immediate prior use, (2) location, (3) zoning classification, (4) other legal restriction on use, (5) availability of public services, (6) size, (7) access to public thoroughfares, and (8) any other relevant factors. If the immediate use prior to establishment of the conservation easement was agricultural, then the land subject to the easement can be classified and treated as agricultural property.

Section 137.017.4 states that property which is classified as agricultural and which is vacant and unused shall be assessed at twelve percent (12%) of its true value. When both the criterion of vacant and unused are met, then the assessor should assess the land subject to the conservation easement using market value as the basis of value.

If either of these two (2) criteria is not met, then the assessor should assess the land pursuant to the agricultural and horticultural land grading rules. Under this scenario, the land should be placed in grade 7 due to the restricted use.