THE DESERT SOIL-GEOMORPHOLOGY PROJECT

The Desert Soil-Geomorphology Project (informally termed the Desert Project) is a study of desert soil and landscape evolution, carried out from 1957 to 1972 by Soil Survey Investigations, Soil Conservation Service, USDA. The study was done in cooperation with the Agricultural Experiment Station, the Agronomy Department at New Mexico State University, and the N.M. Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources at Socorro. The Desert Project covers a 400-square mile area in the vicinity of Las Cruces.

Selected features of the Desert Project are illustrated by maps and diagrams Volume III of the Supplement to the Desert Project Soil Monograph (Gile et al., 2003). Sheet illustrations by I.H. Gile (USDA-NRCS, retired) and B. Nolen (Jornada LTER/USDA ARS Jornada Experimental Range). References used in preparation of these sheets are listed below.

PHYSIOGRAPHIC, CLIMATIC, AND PEDOGENIC SETTING OF THE DESERT PROJECT

Location of the Desert Project

Physiography

Topography, Soil Parent Materials, and General Climatic Zones

General Soil Map

References

SOIL PARENT MATERIALS

Climatic data indicate that the higher elevations are the wettest. Rainfall is greatest at higher elevations because of the orographic effect of the desert and mountain ranges. The lower areas are the driest, and many of the soils are saline. The climate is seasonal, with a definite summer and winter season, and the precipitation is mainly in the summer months. The desert is characterized by a winter rainfall and a summer drought, with a distinct monsoon period in the summer. The climate is temperate, with warm summers and cool winters. The desert is characterized by a high incidence of sand and dust storms, and the air is often hazy.

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