



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources  
Conservation Service

January 23, 2015

State Office

101 South Main  
Temple, TX  
76501-7602  
254-742-9800

Mr. Kenneth Blodgett  
Attn: STB Finance Docket No. 35874  
Surface Transportation Board  
395 E Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Dear Mr. Blodgett:

The NRCS has reviewed the proposed Lone Star Railroad Inc. and Southern Switching Company construction project as outlined in the map provided in your January 9, 2015, letter.

In reviewing the area, there are no hydric soils listed for the area of interest based on your January 9 map. There are approximately 105 acres of soils that are of statewide importance in your area of interest. This could require a Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) rating if federal assistance is requested. If no federal funding or technical assistance is involved with this construction project, then it is exempt from the FPPA regulations (see Part 523 – Farmland Protection Policy Act Manual; Subpart B; 523.10, B., (8)).

Thank you for the opportunity to review this proposed project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Salvador Salinas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first and last names being the most prominent.

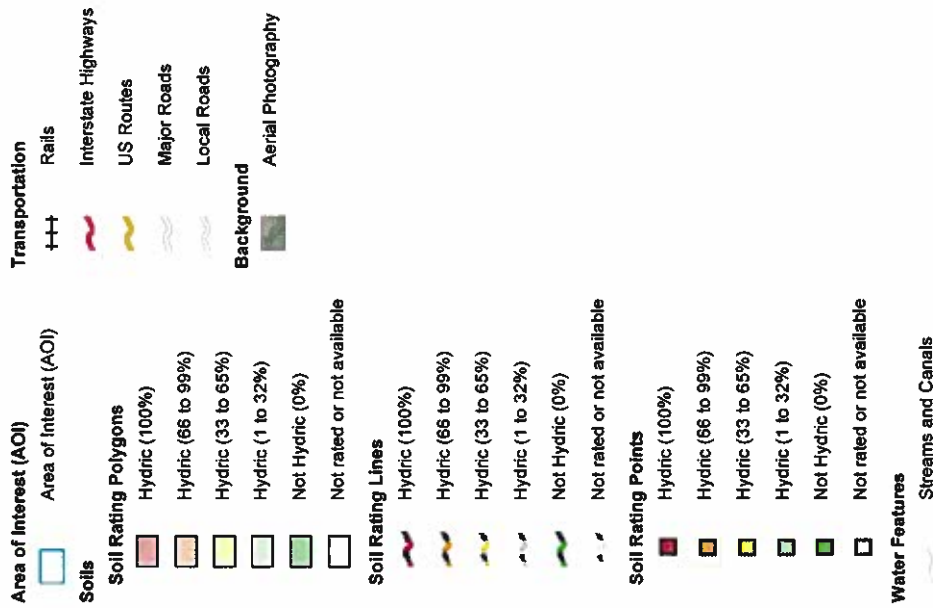
SALVADOR SALINAS  
State Conservationist

Enclosures

Hydric Rating by Map Unit—Howard County, Texas  
(Lone Star Railroad, Inc. and Southern Switching Company)



## MAP LEGEND



## MAP INFORMATION

The soil surveys that comprise your AOI were mapped at 1:24,000.

Please rely on the bar scale on each map sheet for map measurements.

Source of Map: Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Web Soil Survey URL: <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>  
Coordinate System: Web Mercator (EPSG:3857)

Maps from the Web Soil Survey are based on the Web Mercator projection, which preserves direction and shape but distorts distance and area. A projection that preserves area, such as the Albers equal-area conic projection, should be used if more accurate calculations of distance or area are required.

This product is generated from the USDA-NRCS certified data as of the version date(s) listed below.

Soil Survey Area: Howard County, Texas  
Survey Area Data: Version 11, Sep 30, 2014

Soil map units are labeled (as space allows) for map scales 1:50,000 or larger.

Date(s) aerial images were photographed: Aug 3, 2010—Jan 30, 2011

The orthophoto or other base map on which the soil lines were compiled and digitized probably differs from the background imagery displayed on these maps. As a result, some minor shifting of map unit boundaries may be evident.

## Hydric Rating by Map Unit

| Hydric Rating by Map Unit— Summary by Map Unit — Howard County, Texas (TX227) |                                                    |        |              |                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|--------|--------------|----------------|
| Map unit symbol                                                               | Map unit name                                      | Rating | Acres in AOI | Percent of AOI |
| AmB                                                                           | Amarillo loamy fine sand,<br>0 to 3 percent slopes | 0      | 94.2         | 13.4%          |
| BfB                                                                           | Brownfield fine sand,<br>thick surface             | 0      | 179.0        | 25.5%          |
| BvB                                                                           | Patricia fine sand, 0 to 3<br>percent slopes       | 0      | 206.9        | 29.5%          |
| Sr                                                                            | Springer loamy fine<br>sand, undulating            | 0      | 11.0         | 1.6%           |
| Tf                                                                            | Circleback fine sand                               | 0      | 211.1        | 30.1%          |
| Totals for Area of Interest                                                   |                                                    |        | 702.2        | 100.0%         |

## Description

This rating indicates the percentage of map units that meets the criteria for hydric soils. Map units are composed of one or more map unit components or soil types, each of which is rated as hydric soil or not hydric. Map units that are made up dominantly of hydric soils may have small areas of minor nonhydric components in the higher positions on the landform, and map units that are made up dominantly of nonhydric soils may have small areas of minor hydric components in the lower positions on the landform. Each map unit is rated based on its respective components and the percentage of each component within the map unit.

The thematic map is color coded based on the composition of hydric components. The five color classes are separated as 100 percent hydric components, 66 to 99 percent hydric components, 33 to 65 percent hydric components, 1 to 32 percent hydric components, and less than one percent hydric components.

In Web Soil Survey, the Summary by Map Unit table that is displayed below the map pane contains a column named 'Rating'. In this column the percentage of each map unit that is classified as hydric is displayed.

Hydric soils are defined by the National Technical Committee for Hydric Soils (NTCHS) as soils that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper part (Federal Register, 1994). Under natural conditions, these soils are either saturated or inundated long enough during the growing season to support the growth and reproduction of hydrophytic vegetation.

The NTCHS definition identifies general soil properties that are associated with wetness. In order to determine whether a specific soil is a hydric soil or nonhydric soil, however, more specific information, such as information about the depth and duration of the water table, is needed. Thus, criteria that identify those estimated soil properties unique to hydric soils have been established (Federal Register, 2002). These criteria are used to identify map unit components that normally are associated with wetlands. The criteria used are selected estimated soil properties that are described in "Soil Taxonomy" (Soil Survey Staff, 1999) and "Keys to Soil Taxonomy" (Soil Survey Staff, 2006) and in the "Soil Survey Manual" (Soil Survey Division Staff, 1993).

If soils are wet enough for a long enough period of time to be considered hydric, they should exhibit certain properties that can be easily observed in the field. These visible properties are indicators of hydric soils. The indicators used to make onsite determinations of hydric soils are specified in "Field Indicators of Hydric Soils in the United States" (Hurt and Vasilas, 2006).

### References:

Federal Register. July 13, 1994. Changes in hydric soils of the United States.

Federal Register. September 18, 2002. Hydric soils of the United States.

Hurt, G.W., and L.M. Vasilas, editors. Version 6.0, 2006. Field indicators of hydric soils in the United States.

Soil Survey Division Staff. 1993. Soil survey manual. Soil Conservation Service. U.S. Department of Agriculture Handbook 18.

Soil Survey Staff. 1999. Soil taxonomy: A basic system of soil classification for making and interpreting soil surveys. 2nd edition. Natural Resources Conservation Service. U.S. Department of Agriculture Handbook 436.

Soil Survey Staff. 2006. Keys to soil taxonomy. 10th edition. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

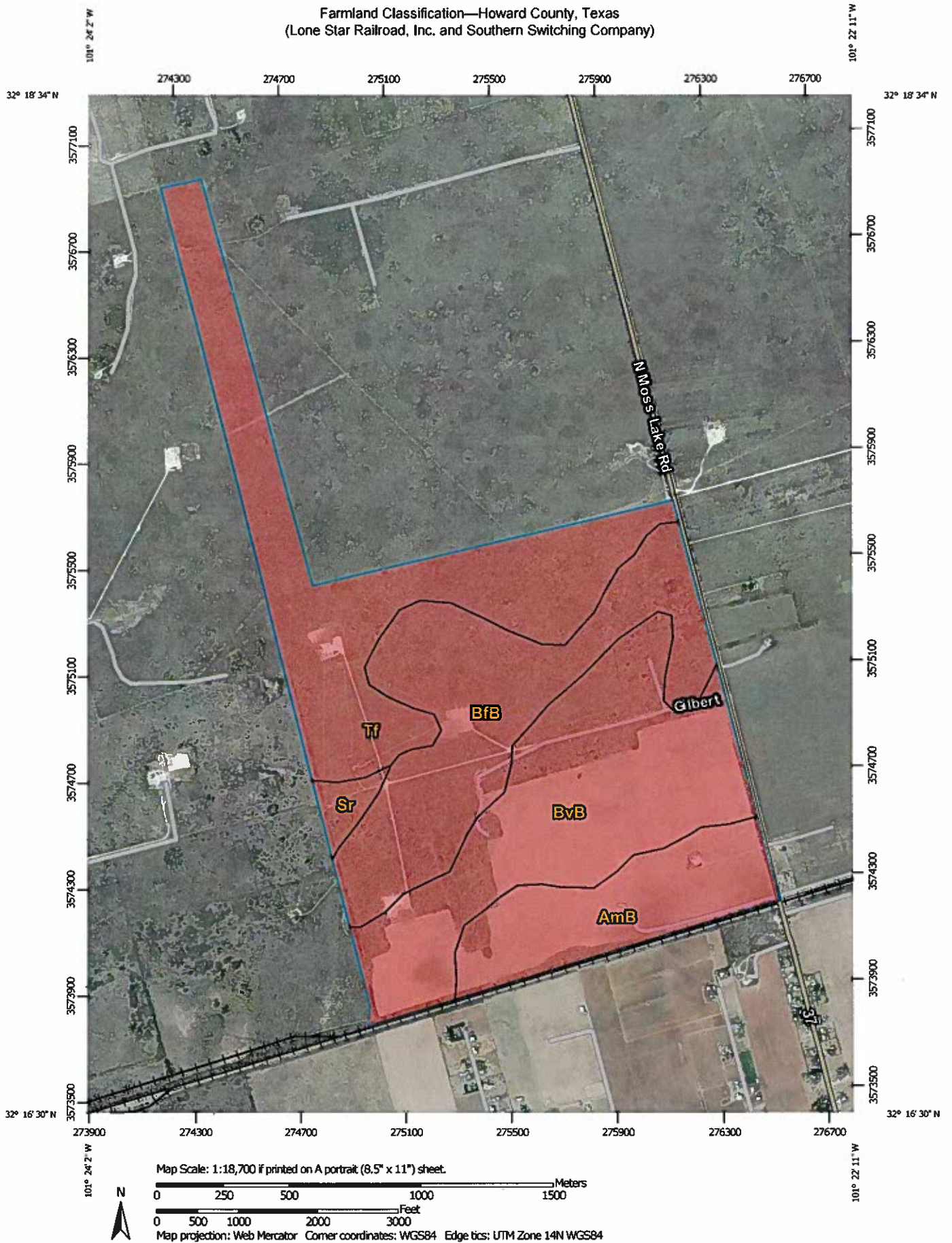
## Rating Options

*Aggregation Method:* Percent Present

*Component Percent Cutoff:* None Specified

*Tie-break Rule:* Lower

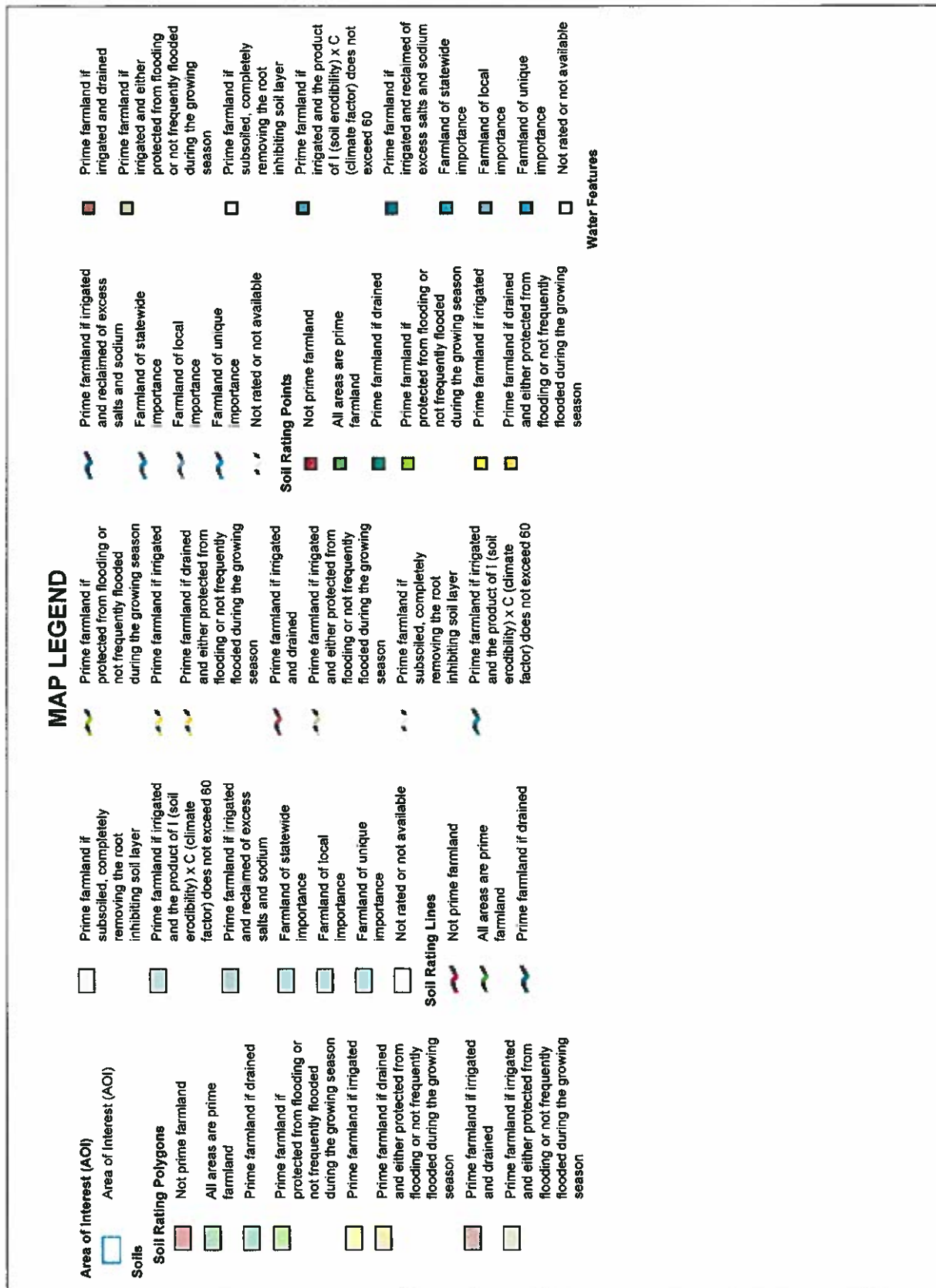
Farmland Classification—Howard County, Texas  
(Lone Star Railroad, Inc. and Southern Switching Company)



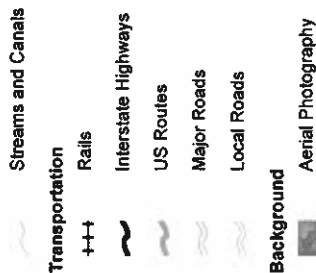
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Web Soil Survey  
National Cooperative Soil Survey

1/23/2015  
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## MAP INFORMATION



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## Farmland Classification

| Farmland Classification— Summary by Map Unit — Howard County, Texas (TX227) |                                                    |                    |              |                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Map unit symbol                                                             | Map unit name                                      | Rating             | Acres in AOI | Percent of AOI |
| AmB                                                                         | Amarillo loamy fine sand,<br>0 to 3 percent slopes | Not prime farmland | 94.2         | 13.4%          |
| BfB                                                                         | Brownfield fine sand,<br>thick surface             | Not prime farmland | 179.0        | 25.5%          |
| BvB                                                                         | Patricia fine sand, 0 to 3<br>percent slopes       | Not prime farmland | 206.9        | 29.5%          |
| Sr                                                                          | Springer loamy fine<br>sand, undulating            | Not prime farmland | 11.0         | 1.6%           |
| Tf                                                                          | Circleback fine sand                               | Not prime farmland | 211.1        | 30.1%          |
| Totals for Area of Interest                                                 |                                                    |                    | 702.2        | 100.0%         |

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wide Importanc

## Description

Farmland classification identifies map units as prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, farmland of local importance, or unique farmland. It identifies the location and extent of the soils that are best suited to food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. NRCS policy and procedures on prime and unique farmlands are published in the "Federal Register," Vol. 43, No. 21, January 31, 1978.

## Rating Options

*Aggregation Method:* No Aggregation Necessary

*Tie-break Rule:* Lower