

5. Overlays of factors to reveal spatial patterns of "intrinsic suitabilities" for diverse land uses, Potomac River Basin Study of 1965–66, reproduced in Design with Nature.



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6. This matrix, which was employed to produce "suitability" maps, shows compatibility among diverse land uses and various "natural determinants" and records the planners' assessment of potential conflicts and their consequences. Potomac River Basin Study of 1965–66, reproduced in Design with Nature.

The students conducted a comprehensive survey of the river basin, which McHarg termed "the ecological inventory" and his students later came to call "the layer cake" or "the litany." It was always the same list, in the same order (climate, geology, hydrology, soils, vegetation, and wildlife), sometimes further elaborated by field. In 1967, he described the reasons for this ordering:

Written on the place and upon its inhabitants lies mute all physical, biological and cultural history awaiting to be understood by those who can read it. This is the prerequisite for intelligent intervention and adaptation. So let us begin at the beginning. The place, any place, can only be understood through its physical evolution. Both climate and geology can be invoked to interpret physiography, the current configuration of the place. If one now knows historical geology, climate, and