



Learn More About Your Soils with Web Soil Survey!

Web Soil Survey is the USDA-NRCS's soils information tool, containing soil maps, descriptions, and ratings available for more than 95 percent of US counties. Additional soils information is added and/or updated regularly. With Web Soil Survey, you can access soils data for your acres, your rented acres, and fields across the country, state and country, 24-7-365, with the click of a mouse.

The Web Soil Survey website is organized similar to a standard set of file folders – use the tabs at the top to open folders of interest – use tabs on the side to choose specific tasks. With a little practice navigation through the site will become simple, intuitive and fun!

To simplify the process, here are a few basic step-by-step directions to identify an (AOI) area of interest and begin learning about the specific soil characteristics.

General Web Soil Survey Directions

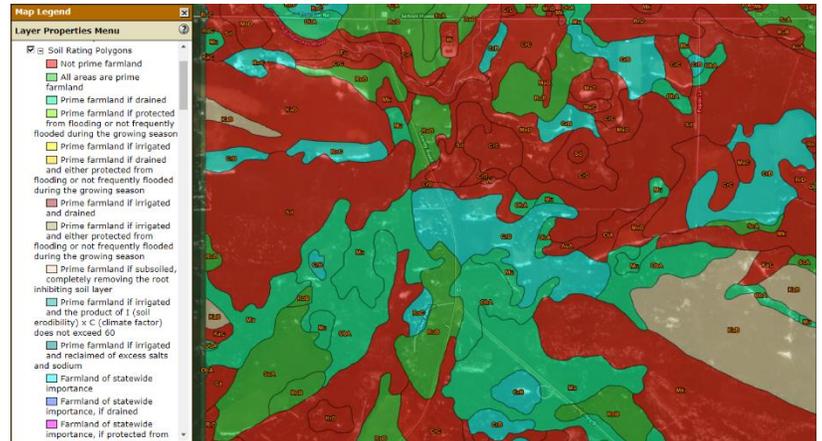
1. Go to <https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/>
2. Click on the green button "Start WSS" on the upper portion of the page.
3. On the left-hand side of the page under the Area of Interest (AOI) tab, choose "Address" of the quick navigation tools to locate the farmland. To do this, click on the down arrows to the right of the option. A drop-down menu will appear to enter the nearest address to the land and the click "View".
4. An aerial map will appear in the map area on the right. The map navigation tools are found at the top of the map. Hover over each tool with the cursor to learn more about their function.



5. The "Zoom In" (+) and "Zoom Out" (-) features aid in appropriately sizing the farmland within the available map space. The "Pan" (hand) tool is used to move the screen view in any direction while remaining at the same scale.
6. Once the field is within the map window, the creation of an area of interest (AOI) is the next task. To do this, click on the "Define the AOI by Polygon" tool and draw a box around the farm land to create an AOI. If done correctly, the field will be covered with green/blue parallel lines once the area is traced and the mouse is double clicked to close the area.
7. The other navigation tabs may be of interest for more detailed study, so give them a try as well!
8. Now, with the AOI set, the soil data can be accessed. Near the top of the webpage, just below the red and brown bars, there are five tabs. The active tab is red (currently *Area of Interest (AOI)*).
9. Click on the "Soil Map" tab. The tab will turn red and the map in your window will be replaced with a map showing the soil series boundaries. The soil map unit information is listed on the left-hand side within the "Map Unit Legend".
10. Click on the soil map unit name in the legend, a window will open providing general landform, soil profile, and soil properties information.
11. To view more detailed soil information, click on the "Soil Data Explorer" tab at the top of the page. Under this tab are four sub-tabs – "Intro to Soils" (general soils information, non-field specific),

“Suitabilities and Limitations” (land use evaluations by soil map unit), *“Soil Properties and Qualities”* (laboratory data), *“Soil Reports”* (generates more detailed information on soil use).

12. These four tabs work in a similarly, for example purposes click on the *“Suitabilities and Limitations for Use”* sub-tab.
13. Click on the down arrows to the left of *“Land Classifications”*.
14. Click on the down arrows to the left of *“Farmland Classification”*.
15. Click on the *“View Rating”* button and the map will now be color-coded by soil map unit based upon the unit’s farmland classification.
16. To view the legend, click on the small tab marked *“Legend”* on the upper left-hand side of the map. The legend will identify the meaning of each map color.
17. Study the many subtabs and ratings to learn more about your soils’ potential for a building site, location of hydric (wetland) soils, soil texture, soil health, soil erodibility, soil production classes, and so much more!
18. To print any of the maps, click on the *“Printable Version”* button on the upper right side of the webpage and make the appropriate selections.
19. To learn more about another piece of farm land, click on the *“Area of Interest”* tab and click on the *“Clear AOI”* button on the left-hand side. Then use the map tools to navigate to the new section, set the AOI using one of the *“Define AOI”* tools, and start the process over again!



It is important to remember the information provided in Web Soil Survey is not exact, as soils are mapped at a specific scale. As a result, small-scale soil differences and the natural gradation and variation in soil units are often not reflected in online soil maps. Soil survey maps are designed to provide general soils data to inform management decisions, not provide precise site-specific information. To learn more, about soil survey uses and limitations for Wisconsin, go to [Soil Survey Wisconsin- Uses and Limitations](#) to download the pdf.

Web Soil Survey is a quick and easy way to learn more about a parcel of land before ever setting foot in the field. Better understanding the inherent soil properties of farmland will assist in making better decisions for land management strategies, whether the intent is cropping, construction, forestry, or natural land management. Knowledge is power, so “dig in” to Web Soil Survey today!

-Check out SoilWeb, an app for Android or IOS, to access soil survey information for the soil you are standing on at any moment! It is free for download!

Jamie Patton, UW-Nutrient and Pest Management Program (original author)

Josh Kamps, Extension-Lafayette County (edited 11/19/2020)