

## Getting Started Instructions for Web Soil Survey v 3.4

The USDA-NRCS provides the most up-to-date official information about the soils in a given area and is available from the [Web Soil Survey](#). Web Soil Survey customers may get data for a specific user-defined Area of Interest. If spatial soil data are available for your Area of Interest, Web Soil Survey also generates soil maps along with interpretive information for your individual interest. For example, in the case of foundations, there are a number of interpretations that provide limitations for dwellings with basements and dwelling with concrete slabs. Soil properties that affect foundations are the shrink-swell potential, depth to a saturated zone, flooding and depth to bedrock.

Information about how to use Web Soil Survey, including a link to this **Getting Started** document, is available on the Web Soil Survey home page. Look on the right side of the home page in the **I Want To...** and **I Want Help With...** sections.

Here's a brief overview to get you started using Web Soil Survey:

1. Browse to the [Web Soil Survey](#) home page.
2. To start the application, click the large round green button labeled **Start WSS**.
3. After the map refreshes, you can use the **Zoom In** map tool.

Click on the **Zoom In** tool to put the map in **Zoom In** mode. Then either click on the map to zoom in, or click and drag the map to zoom to the rectangle you've drawn. Zoom in as close as you need.

4. Or alternatively, on the left side of the browser window, in the **Quick Navigation** panel, click on one of the forms – **Address, State and County, Soil Survey Area**, etc. Enter the information, and click **View**.
5. Before you can view any soil data, you must define your Area of Interest (AOI). You can set your AOI by drawing a rectangle or a polygon on the map, or you can set your AOI to a whole Soil Survey Area. AOIs created using the **AOI Rectangle** and **AOI Polygon** tools are limited to a maximum of 100,000 acres, but Soil Survey Area AOIs are not.
  - To set your AOI to a rectangle, click the **AOI Rectangle** map tool. Then click and hold the left mouse button, and drag a rectangle on the map. When you release the mouse button, the rectangle you've drawn will be set as your Area of Interest.
  - To set your AOI to a polygon, click the **AOI Polygon** map tool. Then click points on the map to define your AOI. To finish, either double click the last point, or press CTRL while clicking the last point.


- To set your AOI to a whole Soil Survey Area, in **Quick Navigation**, open the **Soil Survey Area** form. Choose a state and Soil Survey Area using the dropdowns. Then click **Set AOI**.
6. Once you have set your AOI, click the **Soil Map** tab to see the soil map and map unit information.
  7. To create a printable document containing the map and information on the **Soil Map** tab, click the **Printable Version** button, and then click the **View** button.
  8. To run soil ratings or soil reports, click the **Soil Data Explorer** tab, then the one of the inner tabs: **Suitabilities and Limitations for Use**, **Soil Properties and Qualities**, or **Soil Reports**.
  9. On the left side of the browser window, click the **Open All** button to expand all the folders, or click an individual folder to list the items within it.
  10. Click one of the items to open the form, then set options as desired, and click **View Rating** or **View Soil Report**. This will show the data in tabular form and, for the Ratings, in color-coded map form. Click the **Legend** tab at the left side of the map to see a legend of the Rating values.
  11. To create a printable version of the soil data, click **Printable Version** or **Add to Shopping Cart**:
    - **Printable Version** generates a PDF document containing the rating or report that you just ran. If a PDF does not open up then you may have a pop-up blocker preventing you from viewing the PDF. Here is a work-around:
      - Click the Preferences link in the Navigation bar
      - Uncheck "Open Links and PDFs in External Windows"
      - Click the Save Preferences button.
    - **Add to Shopping Cart** adds the report or map to the shopping cart. You can add multiple ratings and reports to the shopping cart and then create a PDF document containing all the items you added to it.

Once you're done adding content to the shopping cart, click the **Shopping Cart (Free)** tab, and then click the **Check Out** button. This will generate a single PDF containing all the items you added. By default, the **Soil Map** content is automatically included in your PDF.

For best results, limit the number of items you add to the shopping cart to ten or fewer.

12. There is a **Search** function that you can use to search for where specific keywords occur in the application. The **Search** form is located in the upper left corner of each tab. Set your

Area of Interest, then click **Search** and enter keywords, such as “hydric rating” or “KCI”, and then click the **Search** button. The search results are links that navigate to the place in the application where the keywords were found.

13. After you have defined your AOI, you can also click the **Download Soils Data** link to download tabular and spatial soils data for your AOI. If you want to download soil data for an entire Soil Survey Area, you do not have to set an AOI first. Simply open WSS and go directly to **Download Soils Data** link. You will need Microsoft Access software to make use of the tabular data, and ArcGIS software to make use of the spatial data.
14. Throughout Web Soil Survey, context-specific help is available by clicking the  **Help** buttons. For more information, see “Useful links” listed at the bottom of these instructions.
15. For assistance with specific soil data questions, click the **Contact Us** link located beneath the USDA logo in the upper left corner. You can contact the local NRCS office using the contact information displayed, or click the link for “[The appropriate State office](#)” to contact the NRCS State Office.

For further assistance, you can also click the link “send email to: [SoilsHotline@usda.gov](mailto:SoilsHotline@usda.gov)”.

**Time Saving Tip!** Use the **Link** on the menu bar, if you have an Area of Interest (AOI) that you want to return to over and over again or that you want to share with someone else. First set your AOI, then click on Link (it is located on the menu bar between Preferences and Logout). Highlight the URL, then press Control-C keys simultaneously to copy the URL, now go to e-mail message and press Control-V to paste the URL into the e-mail message. You may also save the URL as a favorite or bookmark in your browser. Now you can click on the bookmark and it will open WSS and set the AOI at the same time. For more help about using Link, click the online help icon in the Link area. It looks like a question mark.

Useful links:

- [SSURGO data structure](#)
- [Sign up for e-mail updates about WSS](#)
- [Known Problems and Workarounds](#)
- [Tips and Shortcuts](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [WSS Release History](#)

- [Citing WSS as a source of soils data](#)
- [How to hyperlink from other documents to Web Soil Survey](#)
- [Use Google Earth to set multiple AOIs for Web Soil Survey](#)