

Web Soil Survey – A New Way to View Soil Survey Data

Soil surveys provide a field-based scientific inventory of soil resources, including soil maps, data about the physical and chemical properties of soils, and information on the potentials and limitations of each soil. Soil surveys help people make the best decisions about the soil resource. They are used for selecting sites for development, road building, pipeline corridors, and waste disposal; for pollution control; for minimizing risks to human life and property; and for wildlife management, wetlands identification, and soil or water conservation.

Web soil survey at <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/> or by link from <http://soils.usda.gov/survey/> is a delivery system for soil survey data and information, and is publicly accessible site. It is the culmination of efforts to enter or convert soil survey data and spatial information into a national soil information system for storing and delivering information in various formats. The implementation of Web Soil Survey marks the first time that soil maps and data can be viewed online in a nationally consistent method. The system allows the user to select an area of interest and then view maps and related data. Soil maps are currently available for about 2800 soil survey areas in the United States. Additional areas are added as they become available. A data availability map can be viewed at <http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/StatusMap.aspx>. The goal is to have all areas that have been surveyed available by mid 2008.

The Web soil survey system allows for easy updating of data, and replaces the familiar printed soil survey books. Web soil survey uses the most current, up-to-date official USDA soil survey information available.

Web Soil Survey delivers complete soil survey information to a variety of customers in a manner similar to a traditional soil survey report, but reduces the time needed to deliver the information after fieldwork is completed.

Web Soil Survey also does things that are not possible or practical with traditional printed delivery of soil survey data. Customers are able to select only those portions of the soil survey information they want, and will not be required to get the entire document.

When a customer first visits the Web Soil Survey site, they will zoom into and identify their geographic Area of Interest (AOI). Once an AOI has been identified, Web Soil Survey presents a catalog of soil information, which includes up-to-date official soil data from the Soil Data Mart; or SSURGO data available for download and use in a GIS. Web Soil Survey can display soil maps and interpretive thematic maps. Generated maps and data reports can then be printed or saved to the customer's local computer. With this flexibility, a customer is able to build a report or data file customized to their individual needs. A shopping cart feature allows the customer to accumulate generated maps and reports into a single PDF document for printing or download. A linkage to copies of archived soil survey reports (text, tables and maps) in PDF format is also available.

Enhancements and updates to Web Soil Survey are planned on a regular basis.