

NRCS WEB SOIL SURVEY

Internet-based System Allows Users Access to Soil Survey Information

A USDA Web Soil Survey site now provides secure public access to the national soils information system. This site is a simple yet powerful way to access and analyze soils data that contributes to every aspect of public and private land use and development.

Soil survey maps help to enable agricultural producers, conservationists, engineering firms, county and city planners, and others to make informed decisions concerning land use.

Soil surveys began in 1899 as part of the nation's earliest efforts on behalf of cooperative conservation. Known as the National Cooperative Soil Survey, it has evolved into a partnership of state and federal agencies working together to collect, classify, interpret and provide soils information. Today, this site provides critical soils information for land developers, farmers, home buyers, and city planners. The ability to deliver internet access to the public enhances cooperative conservation efforts.

It took the cooperative efforts of several agencies to get the soil surveys in an electronic format. This effort included NRCS, South Dakota State University, South Dakota Conservation Districts, County Governments, South Dakota Department of Agriculture, and the South Dakota Department of Environmental and Natural Resources.

For years, the familiar soil survey books were free to the public in most NRCS field offices, but these are being replaced through the use of the internet. The website has been designed with three easy to use features-Define, View and Explore and operates much like internet sites that provide locator and directional information. When viewers visit the web soil survey, they are asked to "Define" a geographic area of interest by selecting a state and county or just by highlighting an area or areas. Once a location has been defined and projected on the screen, the viewer has the choice to print the map and related information, save it to their hard drive or download the data for use in a geographic information system (GIS).

The viewer also can "Explore" the designated location for specific soils data giving the viewer important information on soil suitability in relationship to usage. This flexibility provides the viewer an opportunity to build a customized report that addresses the viewer's individual needs. Information can be delivered in a variety of formats to include print, CD, DVD or other media.

To view the website, go to <http://soils.usda.gov/survey>