



## How to Use the Web Soil Survey

Soil surveys have entered a new era across Minnesota and the United States. The official soil survey information and documentation now resides online at <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov> (verified 4/20/07). While users may choose to print off information, this information is subject to change and should be checked online frequently for updates.

Online soil surveys still present soil lines on a photographic background indicating the boundaries between different soil types. These maps show the occurrence and distribution of each kind of soil.

For counties that do not have published soil surveys, the county Soil and Water Conservation District office can often provide soils information.

Locate the site on the survey (GPS coordinates, county, address, township, range, section, or simply zoom) and determine what soil map units exist on the parcel:

1. Outline the desired parcel/area using the Define AOI (Area of Interest) tool.
2. Once the AOI has been defined, select the tab for "Soil Map" near the top of the browser window.
3. You will now see a display of the aerial photograph with soil lines over the top. On the left of the map (legend), you will see a summary of map units, map unit names, acres in the AOI and percent composition of the AOI. Map units are denoted by symbols such as 401C.
4. List the map unit symbols found at your location.
5. Selecting the third tab entitled "Soil Data Explorer" allows the mapping of selected soil properties over the AOI.
6. Now select the "Suitabilities and Limitations for Use" tab.
7. Under this tab, there is a suitabilities rating for "Sanitary Facilities." Select this rating.
8. Under this rating, there are numerous interpretations. The five interpretations we are interested in include:
  - a. Septage Application - Incorporation or Injection (MN)
  - b. Septage Application - Surface (MN)
  - c. Septic Tank Absorption Fields - At-Grade (MN)
  - d. Septic Tank Absorption Fields - Mound (MN)
  - e. Septic Tank Absorption Fields - Trench (MN)

These interpretations were developed based on MN Rule Chapter 7080 and are accurate on a regional scale. They are not meant to substitute field site evaluation work.

9. Select the "View Ratings" button to view map of ratings with tables of soil map units and their individual suitabilities.
10. Note: this does not replace recording of specific soil properties, which are required by Minnesota Rule Chapter 7080.1700 (as discussed above). To determine these properties, either select the "Soil Reports" tab and access the desired/required information from the selected reports. Alternatively, you may search individual soil series' properties by accessing the Official Soil Series Descriptions (OSD) website and searching for soils by their specific soil series name as determined from the AOI legend on the web soil survey (<http://soils.usda.gov/technical/classification/osd/index.html>, verified 4/23/2007).