



## *What to do about...*

# Using the Web Soil Survey

Soil is a dirty topic, but everyone needs to learn more about it! Soils information can be crucial to making wise decisions on how to best use the land. Soil maps and related soil data can provide information for a variety of land users including homeowners, gardeners, farmers, developers, home builders, engineers, community planners and others. The USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), working cooperatively with their conservation partners such as local Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) across the nation, has a tool to help people identify the soils on their property as well as the soil data for that site. This natural resource tool is called the "Web Soil Survey" which allows users to quickly find soils information for most locations in the United States. The Web Soil Survey is available online at: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/soils/survey/> You can even use the Web Soil Survey on your mobile device. Marion County's soil survey was updated in 2019.

The Web Soil Survey (WSS) site has 4 basic steps to make the site a simple yet powerful way to access and analyze soil data. The steps are "Define", "View", "Explore" and "Check out". In the "Define" step the user selects the Area of Interest (AOI) on the appropriate map (easy to find by putting in the Address under the Quick Navigation side bar) that identifies the location that they desire soils information for. The AOI tab on the website allows the user to define an area by zooming in and drawing a box around it. The user must complete this step before they can go on to the next three steps.

In the "View" step the user clicks on the Soil Map tab to view and print a map of the soils in their area of interest. In the third "Explore" step the user can click on the "Soil Data Explorer" tab to access soil data for their area of interest. Use this data to determine the suitability of the soils in an area for proposed use. In the fourth "Check Out" step use the shopping cart to get your custom report immediately or download it later.

The Web Soil Survey has many help screens that you can access from the homepage (look on the left sidebar). A little patience may be needed to learn the ins and outs of the system, but with a little effort most people become masters of the site within a few brief trial runs.

The Marion County SWCD strongly encourages people to obtain soils maps and information to help them as they make plans for using the land. If you find your soil type to be rated somewhat or very limited for your intended use please call to get additional assistance. There may be improvements that you could make to make your site more suitable.

**For more information contact the Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District**

**(317) 786-1776**

**[www.marionswcd.org](http://www.marionswcd.org)**