

# VISUAL GUIDE TO USING THE SOIL MAP

## In 5 Easy Steps

When you click on the soil map link from GCAAR's website, it brings you to this page.

1. Click the big green "start" button.

The screenshot shows the Web Soil Survey homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, About Soils, Help, and Contact Us. Below this is a search bar and a 'START WSS' button. A red arrow points to the 'START WSS' button. The main content area features a 'Welcome to Web Soil Survey (WSS)' section with a description of the service and a 'Four Basic Steps' section. The first step is 'Define' and the second is 'View'. The 'Define' step includes a sub-section for 'Area of Interest (AOI)' with a screenshot of the AOI selection interface. The 'View' step includes a sub-section for 'Soil Map' with a screenshot of the soil map interface. On the right side, there are three boxes: 'I Want To...', 'Announcements/Events', and 'I Want Help With...'. The 'I Want To...' box contains a list of links for starting the survey, requirements, hours of operation, finding areas of interest, finding information by topic, hyperlinking, and data structure. The 'Announcements/Events' box contains links for the release of Web Soil Survey 3.1, a release history, and an e-mail update sign-up. The 'I Want Help With...' box contains links for getting started, using the survey, online help, known problems, frequently asked questions, and citing the survey. At the bottom right, there is a 'Tips & Shortcuts WSS' section with a screenshot of a person using a soil sampling tool.

USDA United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

# Web Soil Survey

Home About Soils Help Contact Us

You are here: Web Soil Survey Home

Search  
Enter Keywords    
All NRCS Sites

Browse by Subject

- Soils Home
- National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS)
- Archived Soil Surveys
- Status Maps
- Official Soil Series Descriptions (OSD)
- Soil Series Extent Mapping Tool
- Geospatial Data Gateway
- eFOTG
- National Soil Characterization Data
- Soil Quality
- Soil Geography

The simple yet powerful way to access and use soil data.

**START WSS**

### I Want To...

- Start Web Soil Survey (WSS)
- Know the requirements for running Web Soil Survey – will Web Soil Survey work in my web browser?
- Know the Web Soil Survey hours of operation
- Find what areas of the U.S. have soil data
- Find information by topic
- Know how to hyperlink from other documents to Web Soil Survey
- Know the SSURGO data structure

### Announcements/Events

- Web Soil Survey 3.1 has been released! View description of new features and fixes.
- Web Soil Survey Release History
- Sign up for e-mail updates via GovDelivery

### I Want Help With...

- Getting Started With Web Soil Survey
- How to use Web Soil Survey
- How to use Web Soil Survey Online Help
- Known Problems and Workarounds
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Citing Web Soil Survey as a source of soils data

### Welcome to Web Soil Survey (WSS)

Web Soil Survey (WSS) provides soil data and information produced by the National Cooperative Soil Survey. It is operated by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and provides access to the largest natural resource information system in the world. NRCS has soil maps and data available online for more than 95 percent of the nation's counties and anticipates having 100 percent in the near future. The site is updated and maintained online as the single authoritative source of soil survey information.

Soil surveys can be used for general farm, local, and wider area planning. Onsite investigation is needed in some cases, such as soil quality assessments and certain conservation and engineering applications. For more detailed information, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#) or your [NRCS State Soil Scientist](#).

### Four Basic Steps

- 1 Define.

**Area of Interest (AOI)** Use the **Area of Interest** tab to define your area of interest.

Click to view larger image.

- 2 View.

**Soil Map** Click the **Soil Map** tab to view or print a soil map, and detailed descriptions of the soils in your Area of Interest.

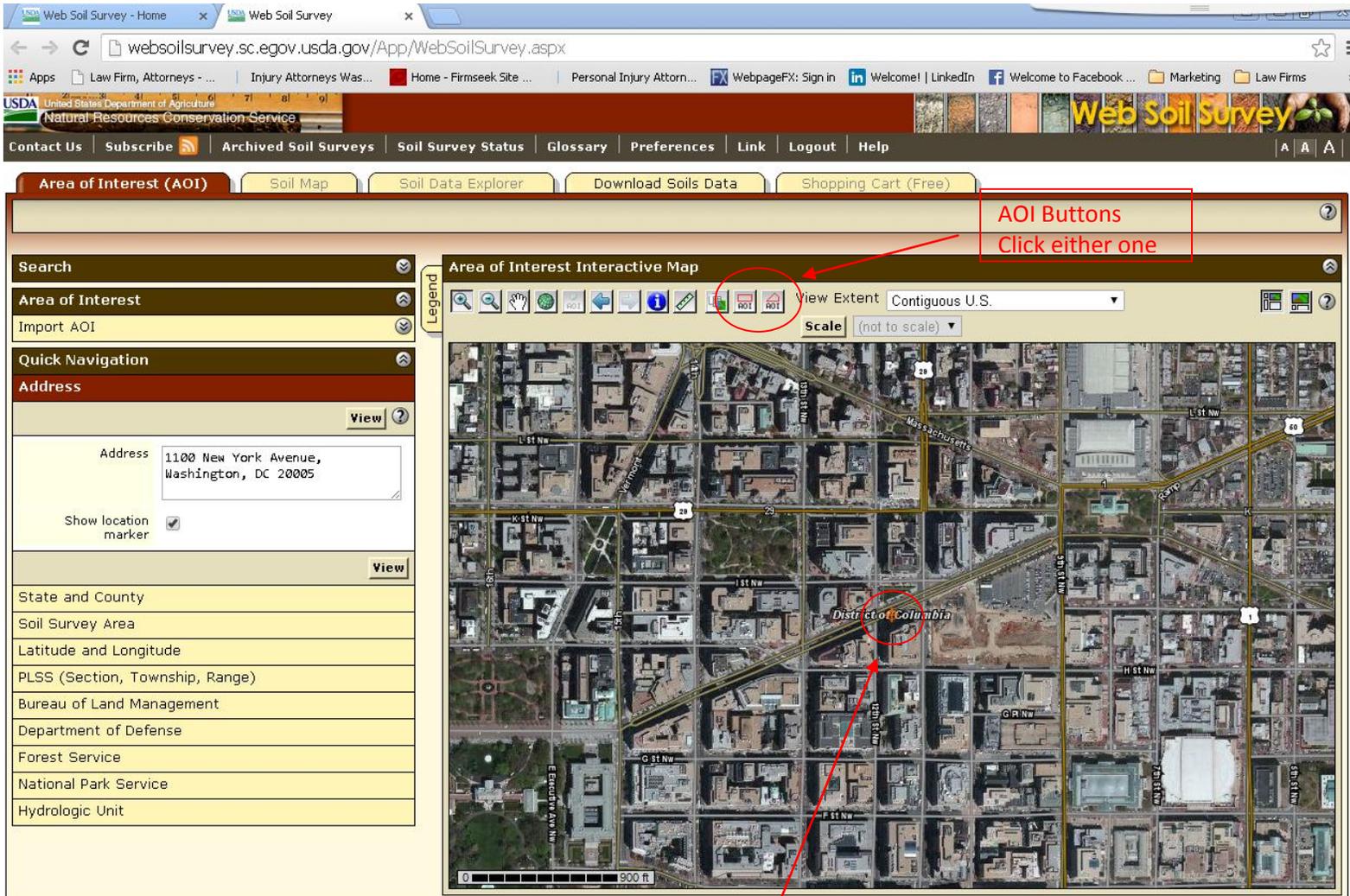
### Tips & Shortcuts WSS

2. Type the address in the address box under “Quick Navigation” and click “view”. Make sure the “Show location marker” is checked.

I’m using our DC address: 1100 New York Avenue, Washington, DC 20005. You can use it too to follow along.

The screenshot displays the USDA Web Soil Survey interface. The browser address bar shows [websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx](http://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx). The navigation menu includes: Contact Us, Subscribe, Archived Soil Surveys, Soil Survey Status, Glossary, Preferences, Link, Logout, Help. The main navigation tabs are: Area of Interest (AOI), Soil Map, Soil Data Explorer, Download Soils Data, and Shopping Cart (Free). The 'Quick Navigation' section is highlighted, showing the 'Address' field with the text '1100 New York Avenue, Washington, DC 20005' and a 'View' button. Below the address field is a 'Show location marker' checkbox, which is checked. The 'Area of Interest Interactive Map' shows a satellite view of the location in Washington, DC, with a scale bar indicating 900 feet. The map includes a legend, a 'View Extent' dropdown menu set to 'Contiguous U.S.', and a 'Scale' dropdown menu set to '(not to scale)'. The map shows a grid of streets and a red location marker at the specified address.

- Your next screen will look like this. The tiny orange circle is the location marker. Click either of the AOI (Area of Interest) buttons and draw around the orange circle... just like you would on the MRIS map to find a house in a specific location.



Tiny Orange Circle  
Location Marker

4. You should be brought to this screen automatically. From here click the "Soil Map" tab.

The screenshot displays the Web Soil Survey web application. At the top, the browser address bar shows the URL `weboilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx`. The navigation menu includes links for [Contact Us](#), [Subscribe](#), [Archived Soil Surveys](#), [Soil Survey Status](#), [Glossary](#), [Preferences](#), [Link](#), [Logout](#), and [Help](#). The main navigation tabs are **Area of Interest (AOI)**, **Soil Map** (highlighted with a red circle and a red arrow), **Soil Data Explorer**, **Download Soils Data**, and **Shopping Cart (Free)**.

The left sidebar contains several sections:

- Search**: A search input field.
- Area of Interest**: Includes **Open All** and **Close All** buttons.
- AOI Properties**: Includes a **Clear AOI** button.
- AOI Information**: Includes a **Name** input field, **Map Unit Symbols** (radio buttons for **Use Soil Survey Area Map Unit Symbols** and **Use National Map Unit Symbols**), and **Area (acres)** (2.75).
- Soil Data Available from Web Soil Survey**: Includes a **Clear AOI** button.
- District of Columbia (DC001)**: Lists **Data Availability** (Tabular and Spatial, complete), **Tabular Data** (Version 7, Sep 24, 2014), and **Spatial Data** (Version 6, Dec 13, 2013).
- Import AOI** and **Export AOI** buttons.
- Quick Navigation**: Includes an **Address** section with a **View** button and a **Show location marker** checkbox (checked).
- State and County** section with a **View** button.

The main content area is titled **Area of Interest Interactive Map**. It features a legend, a toolbar with navigation icons, a **View Extent** dropdown set to **Contiguous U.S.**, and a **Scale** dropdown set to **(not to scale)**. The map itself is an aerial view of a city grid with a red polygon highlighting a specific area of interest. A scale bar at the bottom left of the map indicates 0 to 500 feet.

5. Viola! There is your answer!

The screenshot shows the USDA Web Soil Survey interface. The browser address bar displays [websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx](http://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx). The navigation menu includes "Area of Interest (AOI)", "Soil Map", "Soil Data Explorer", "Download Soils Data", and "Shopping Cart (Free)". The "Soil Map" tab is active, showing a satellite map of an urban area in the District of Columbia. A legend table on the left is circled in red, and a warning message is displayed at the bottom of the map area.

**Map Unit Legend**

District of Columbia (DC001)			
Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI
Ub	Urban land	2.8	100.0%
<b>Totals for Area of Interest</b>		<b>2.8</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Warning: Soil Map may not be valid at this scale.**

You have zoomed in beyond the scale at which the soil map for this area is intended to be used. Mapping of soils is done at a particular scale. The soil surveys that comprise your AOI were mapped at 1:12,000. The design of map units and the level of detail shown in the resulting soil map are dependent on that map scale. Enlargement of maps beyond the scale of mapping can cause misunderstanding of the detail of mapping and accuracy of soil line placement. The maps do not show the small areas of contrasting soils that could have been shown at a more detailed scale.