

## **Get the Latest Dirt on Soils in Your Area**

Soil is a dirty topic, but everyone needs to learn more about it! LaPorte County, Indiana Soil Survey has identified approximately 40 different soil types. And just like your family members, each soil has a different personality and name. These personality differences are very important when deciding what you would like to do with 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, Soil and Water Conservation Districts across the nation, has launched a new product to help people identify the soils on their property as well as the soil data for the soils at that site. The product is a web site called the “Web Soil Survey” which allows users to find soils information for most locations in the United States.

Visit <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/> for the Web Soil Survey. The site has three basic steps, which make Web Soil Survey (WSS) a simple yet powerful way to access and analyze soil data. The steps are “Define”, “View”, and “Explore”. In the “Define” step the user selects the Area of Interest (AOI) on an appropriate map that identifies the location that they desire soil information for. The AOI tab on the website allows the user to define an area by zooming in on a map and drawing a box around an area or by selecting it from a choice list. The user must complete this step before they can go on to the next two 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 “Explore” step or third step the user can click on the “Soil Data Explorer” tab to access soil data for their area of interest. In this step the user can determine the suitability of the soils in an area for a particular use. The Web Soil Survey site has many help screens and a “Web Soil Survey- How to use it” file in PDF format that offers help and support on using the site. Like most new concepts, a little patience is needed to learn the ins and outs of the system, but with a little effort most people become masters of the site.