HOW TO FIND SOILS AND ECOLOGICAL SITE INFORMATION FOR YOUR PROPERTY

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Equipment Needed:

A. Computer with Internet Access
B. PDF reader software installed on your computer (*ie.* Adobe Reader® or Foxit Reader®)
C. Pen/Pencil
D. Piece of Paper

Part One. Find Soils Information using the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey

1. Once you have opened an internet browser on your computer, type in or click the following address – http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx
2. Click on the "Address" button on the left side of the page.
3. Enter your Address information.
4. After entering your address, click the "View" button (it is located right below where you entered your address information). Make sure you know what state and county you are located in (you will need this information later).
5. Now that you have clicked the "View" button, an aerial view (satellite view) of the location should appear in the right-hand frame of your internet browser.
6. You can use the tools in the right-hand frame (*ie.* Hand, Zoom In, Zoom Out, and AOI), AOI = Area Of Interest.
7. If you are viewing an aerial view of your own property, feel free to select an AOI of your property using the AOI rectangle tool.
8. Once you have selected an area using the AOI tool, the right-hand frame of your internet browser will display the aerial view with a selected rectangular zone (the selected zone will be outlined with light blue lines).
9. At the top of your browser you will see that there is a tab (which looks like a file folder tab) labeled "Soil Map", you can click on the "Soil Map" tab in order to view the different soils that occur across the AOI you selected, go ahead and click it.
10. Once you have clicked the "Soil Map" tab, a soil map will appear in your internet browser's right-hand frame.
11. On the soil map the different soils (soil series) will be displayed, each separated by orange colored lines and labeled with orange numbers. If you would like to create a printout of this information, click on the "Printable Version" button at the upper right-hand corner of the frame.
12. Meanwhile, in the left-hand frame you will see a categorical breakdown of the different soil series listed by name and number (listed under the heading "Map Unit") with corresponding estimates of the area each soil series occupies within your selected AOI. You can now click on one of the unique soil series (under the "Map Unit" heading) for more information about that particular soil.
13. Having clicked on a unique soils series name under the "Map Unit" heading, you will get a separate pop out window that describes it. If you would like to print the information located in this pop out window, click the "Printable Version" button in the upper right-hand corner.
14. Now that you have the pop out window open for display, locate the heading listed as "Interpretive Groups", below that you will see a subheading listed as "Ecological Site".
15. Every soil series is grouped according to a matching Ecological Site. What Ecological Site does the soil series you chose belong to? Go ahead and write it down. Make sure you not only write down the name of the ecological site, but also write down the alphanumeric code that goes with it (example alphanumeric code = "R067BY015CO"). The next thing we will do is track down information about the Ecological Site. (An Ecological Site is a description of land based on its unique (soil, topography, climate, disturbance factors, and plant life. An Ecological Site Description is a highly useful piece of information for land managers).

Part Two. Locate an Ecological Site Description using the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) EFOTG Website

1. Now we are going to locate an Ecological Site Description, we have to open a new internet browser window (information about the ecological site is located on a different website). Once you have opened a new internet browsing window, type in or click the following address – http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov//efotg_locator.aspx
2. This new website is the "efotg Document Locator" hosted by the NRCS. On the webpage you will see a map of the United States. Click on the state that is associated with the address you typed in earlier (the state that you were mapping soils in a few minutes ago).
3. Once you click on a state, you will be presented a map of the different counties within that state. Select the county for the address you typed in earlier.
4. Now that you have selected your county, you will be presented a webpage with three frames. Right now, we are only concerned with the far left frame. In the far left frame you will see a set of folders. In the second folder from the top you will see a dialog box with a drop down menu. When you first open your page, the default dialog in the box that is displayed is "Section I". We want to change this to "Section II". So click on the drop down arrow and select "Section II".
5. Once you have selected the "Section II" folder, a new list of folders will be shown to you. Click on the folder that is labeled "Ecological Site Descriptions".
6. Once you click on the "Ecological Site Descriptions" folder, a single or set of folders will be presented to you. These folders will have the title "Major Land Resource Area". We need to access the information in these folders, but we need to choose the correct "Major Land Resource Area" in order to get the correct information. Look back at your notes, find the alphanumeric code that was listed for the ecological site we are searching for. What is the code? Most codes look something like this: (R067BY015CO). In this example code, the "Major Land Resource Area" is indicated by the first four to five characters: "R067B". So, the "Major Land Resource Area" we are searching for in this example is "67B".
7. Knowing this information, find the appropriate characters on the alphanumeric code for your own ecological site and then click on the correct "Major Land Resource Area" folder.
8. Now that you are in the correct folder you will be shown a list of PDF files with different names, each file is named for a different ecological site that occurs within that particular "Major Land Resource Area". Locate the file that corresponds to your ecological site. Once you have found the correct file, click it.
9. Once you have clicked the file, your internet browser will begin opening a PDF file. This PDF file should be the Ecological Site Description you were looking for. In the top right-hand corner of the first page of the PDF file will be the ecological site name as well as the alphanumeric code. Did you arrive at the Ecological Site you were looking for? If so, then go ahead and download/save the file to your computer. If not, retrace your steps and try to locate the correct Ecological Site Description.