



Soils

The new Iowa interactive Soil Survey

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Understanding the basic properties of soils leads to better crop management, soil nutrient management, and soil and water conservation. The Soil Survey includes soil maps and descriptions of each type of soil in each county including interpretations of a soil's potential for use.

Traditional Soil Survey reports have been paper copies of text, tables, and maps that traditionally have been cumbersome to use. The goal of a Soil Survey is to provide quality information for land use planning and management, and in order to make them user-friendly, Iowa's newest digital Soil Surveys have been created using an interactive GIS technology that is quite easy to learn to navigate.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is responsible for developing these interactive digital soil surveys for each county in Iowa, having an overall goal of making the data accessible to and meeting the needs of most users. Cooperators include the Iowa Agriculture

and Home Economics Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University, and the Division of Soil Conservation, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

The new digital interactive Soil Survey software called *SoilView* runs in Windows and comes embedded with each county Soil Survey on a CD. The user is provided soils information through Soil Survey tables and through an interactive GIS package. Specific data can be selected from tables to develop interpretative maps; determine acres, crop yields, and corn suitability ratings of specified boundaries; view map unit descriptions; and many other specified tasks. *SoilView* can be run directly from the Soil Survey CD or installed on a personal computer.

An Iowa map showing which counties have the interactive Soil Survey CD currently available is shown below or can be viewed at <http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/soils/pdfs/survcd.pdf>.



Counties with Soil Survey available on CD

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An order form for interactive Soil Surveys available for Iowa counties is at http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/soils/pdfs/SurvCD_OrderForm.pdf.

More information about the development of the interactive Soil Surveys and examples of what can be done using them can be seen at <http://www.il.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/soils/p329.html>.

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