

Cybersoils:
New tools for using soil surveys in the digital age

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Several barriers exist to the full utilization of soil survey data by natural resource managers and others. One is that soil surveys are often not available for counties, even after mapping is completed, due to a backlog in the publication schedule. Another is that it is technically difficult to link the soil attribute data to a soil map to create interpretive maps. Also, many natural resource managers do not have GIS software or expertise to examine relationships between soils and other spatial data. New products and services in Missouri address these barriers. The NRCS is now producing soil surveys on CD for recently completed counties. The CDs contain all of the information in the published report, and are often available years before the hard copy is printed. Interpretive maps can now be easily created in ArcView GIS software with a new ArcView extension, the Soil Data Viewer. At the University of Missouri, the Center for Agricultural, Resource and Environmental Systems (CARES) provides internet access to all available Missouri soil survey data. The site allows users to create custom soil maps with other spatial data, including some GIS capabilities such as clipping, buffering and area calculations. The soil survey manuscripts are available from the site, and interpretive maps and reports can be generated.