

Unit 3 Lesson 2 Soil Activity Worksheet

Activity:

The US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Services Department (NRCS) is the federal agency that manages the Web Soil Survey database. The database includes more than 95% of the nation's counties. It's a broadly used resource for a variety of soil-related information. Today, we will use it to examine some important soil characteristics. It's a large database with a lot of information, but we will narrow in on some characteristics foresters are most interested in.

- The steps for pulling up site soil information are below and can be [found here](#).
 - From the main page, click the green button - Start WSS
 - Search by address under quick navigation (you can use your address, or anywhere you'd like) and click view.
 - Use the red rectangle tool on the legend to draw an Area of Interest (AOI) around the area you'd like to see. The chosen area will be shaded in blue.
 - At each step add to cart to get a free PDF at the end.

Soil properties

- Click the Soil Map tab at the top. To the left, you will see a list of soil types, which you can click on for details.
 - Question: *What are the most common types of soil in the area you chose?*
- Under the Soil Data Explorer tab: Soil Properties and Qualities tab: Soil Physical Properties on the left-side menu, choose Percent Clay and click the box for All Layers. Then click "View Rating" and scroll down if necessary to see the % clay, under Rating (percent), for each soil type. Do the same for sand and silt, completing the table below for the two most common soils in your area of interest.

	Soil 1.	Soil 2.	What guesses can you make about the drainage based on this information?
% Clay			
% Silt			
% Sand			

- Using the Soil Map tab, click on a soil name under the Map Unit Legend on the left side. What are the following characteristics of the two most common soils?
 - Parent material
 - Typical profile
 - Drainage class
 - Frequency of flooding
 - Ecological site description

Vegetative productivity

- Click the Soil Data Explorer tab at the top.
- Under vegetative productivity, choose Forestland Productivity and click View soil report. This shows common trees, site index, and volume of wood fiber.
- The site index is the average height, in feet, that dominant and codominant trees of a given species attain in a certain number of years.

Save PDF - Add to cart - it's free and will produce a PDF of maps.