The latest version of the Web Soil Survey 3.0 (WSS) was recently launched by the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation (NRCS) and can be accessed at http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov. The web-based application provides anyone with computer access a wealth of free soils information along with soil maps, properties, and interpretations aimed at helping with land use decisions.

The first and most noticeable change in WSS 3.0 is the maximum size for the Area of Interest (AOI) has been increased from 10,000 to 100,000 acres. The map imagery and map appearance also have been improved, and they’re now using imagery from Bing. The number of options for changing map properties has been expanded to include: soil boundary color, soil boundary thickness, soil label size, and background image shading. Plus the “identify” tool can now display information about multiple data layers at the same time.

Soil special line features are now labeled according to the type of line feature with an abbreviation such as “ESO,” and viewers can view the corresponding feature name using the map identify tool. SSURGO and STATSGO2 data can now be downloaded directly from WSS without having to first define an area of interest or go to the Soil Data Mart.

The latest version of the Web Soil Survey offers a number of enhancements such as improved map imagery and map appearance.

To make things even better for the viewer, support has been added for Pacific Island Area data as well as for map unit line and point data. The options for tiling printable maps have been improved, and RSS notifications are now available regarding soil data updates. And most importantly, WSS is now online 24/7, eliminating bothersome downtime. To access the latest version of WSS, visit http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov.