

Use and abuse of soil survey and relate products
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Soil Surveys are one of many tools that can be used in the preliminary planning for wastewater treatment. When used with GIS, soil surveys can be a valuable reference source to find suitable soils, depth to bedrock or water tables, and slope. Other information from county and state GIS databases, such as tax parcel, road, and hydrography layers, can also be added to aid in planning. It is important to remember, however, that this information does not replace on-site investigation. Users must realize the limitations of the soil survey. Attention should be paid to map scale, inclusions, complexes and similar and dissimilar soils. Enlarging a soil survey map could result in a misunderstanding of the detail of mapping. Also, because of the scale at which soil surveys are made, not every soil type can be delineated on the map. This results in map units containing inclusions to a map unit, which may be similar or dissimilar to the named soil. A map unit that is named as a complex will have two or more soil types that could not be separated into their own polygons repeating in the landscape. While all North Carolina counties have tabular data online, not every soil survey has been digitized by NRCS. It is important for both planning and regulatory reasons to use the 'official' copy of the soil survey, which will be either in paper or digital form, depending on the year published.