Digging Into Soils:
A Hands-on Field Workshop

Location: Twin Orchard Farm, Southampton, MA
Date: 8:30 am - 4:00 pm, June 3, 2026 (Rain date: 6/4)
Fee: $200 YOWA members
$300 all others (includes YOWA membership)

6 TCHs SE-MA pending

Join us for an interactive, field-based training designed for health agents, regulators, and onsite wastewater professionals looking to strengthen their understanding of soil evaluation. This workshop will take place entirely outdoors*, where participants will work directly with multiple soil test pits under the guidance of experienced instructors and NRCS soil scientists.

Why Attend?

Attendees will gain practical experience identifying soil horizons, determining texture and structure, recognizing redoximorphic features, and interpreting site conditions for onsite wastewater system suitability. The training will also introduce how to use NRCS soil survey resources and discuss how field observations inform real-world regulatory and design decisions.

This is an introductory-level workshop and is not a soil evaluator certification course. It is ideal for those newer to soils or anyone looking for a refresher in a hands-on learning environment.

8:30 – 9:00 AM
Arrival, Check-In & Coffee

9:00 – 9:15AM
Welcome, Introduction and Industry Updates

9:15– 9:30 AM
Soils Basics Refresher
- Why soils matter in onsite wastewater

9:30– 10:00 AM
Soil Survey & Tools (NRCS-Led)

10:00 – 12:00 PM
Field Session I: Soil Pit Rotations led by NRCS soil scientists and experienced practitioners

12:00 – 1:00 PM
Lunch Break (On Your Own)

Lunch not included. Bring a bagged lunch. List of local places will be provided.

1:00 – 3:00 PM
Field Session II: Soil Test Pit Rotation 2

3:00 – 3:45 PM
Review Test Pit Logs; Group Discussion; Code Compliance (NRCS-Led)

3:45 – 4:00 PM
Wrap-Up & Q&A

REGISTRATION & MORE INFO

**Part of the property is adjacent to a professional bee farm.*

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Speaker List

Morgan McKee is a certified professional soil scientist who has been working as a soil scientist with NRCS since early 2023. Prior to being a soil scientist, she spent 7 years in NRCS field offices in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Maryland as a soil conservationist, working with farmers and forest landowners to improve their land. She currently works to provide soil science training and technical guidance to NRCS staff, customers, and partners as well as completing wetland determinations and on-site soil assessments. Prior to working for the agency, Morgan worked as a consultant, collecting wetland inventory data throughout coastal Louisiana.

Rebekah Novak is a civil engineer with experience in surveying, wastewater operations, and septic system design. She holds Soil Evaluator, Grade 5 Wastewater Operator, and System Inspector licenses. At RCAP Solutions, she supports small Massachusetts communities with technical assistance and training to improve water and wastewater systems.

Maggie Payne is the State Soil Scientist for USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Massachusetts and Vermont. Maggie has a BA in Biology and Environmental Science from Colby College and a MS in Soil and Natural Resources Science from the University of Rhode Island. She has worked as a coastal pedologist, soil scientist, and soil conservationist for NRCS in Rhode Island and Massachusetts for 17 years. Her areas of expertise include coastal and subaqueous soils, wetland restoration, ground penetrating radar, and soil carbon research.

Alyssa Rusiecki is the past President of the Yankee Onsite Wastewater Association (YOWA) and currently serves as the Assistant Director of Environmental Health at the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Department of Environmental Health & Safety. She holds a Master's degree in Soil Science. Alyssa brings a diverse background to her work, including previous experience as both a Health Agent and system designer. Alyssa continues to contribute her expertise by promoting education in environmental health and on-site wastewater management.

Dave Zimmermann is a certified professional soil scientist with over 20 years of experience working in natural resources for federal agencies. He is currently a Resource Soil Scientist for NRCS in Massachusetts. In that role he assists NRCS staff, customers, and partners with understanding and interpreting soils and soil survey for the planning and implementation of conservation practices and land management as well as conducting wetland determinations. Past soil scientist roles with the agency include working in soil survey field offices mapping soils in Nevada, Minnesota, North Dakota, and northern California as well as in a regional office providing technical oversite and leadership to several soil survey offices across the Northeast Region

Equipment List

1. Sun block and hat
2. Insect repellant and lint roller (for ticks); tape for pants legs (for tick exclusion!)
3. Soil Color book (Munsell Soil Color Book #M50215B or GLOBE #GEO801)
4. Tape measure
5. Trowel, knife, or small garden shovel
6. Soil sample tray (a plastic plate or muffin tin is acceptable)
7. Spray water bottle
8. Small towel to wipe hands
9. Clipboard
10. Proper field clothing including rain gear, work boots, etc.
11. Rubber boots suitable for crossing shallow water.
12. 5-Gallon bucket with cover – you can store your supplies in the bucket and use it for seating in the field.
13. Camp chair or seat (optional) for breaks

If you prefer to bring a lunch or snack, you are welcome to do so. No lunch is provided, although coffee and donuts are provided in the morning.