The soil quality assessment card was developed by farmers in collaboration with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Natural Resources Districts (NRD), and the University Nebraska Lincoln. It has been locally adapted by Nebraska NRCS as a field tool for Nebraska farmers, educators, and agricultural support professionals such as soil conservationists, Cooperative Extension educators, or agriculture industry personnel.

Regular use will allow you to assess current soil quality conditions, record changes in soil quality, and compare fields and management practices. The card is most effective when filled out by the same person over time. It provides you with a qualitative assessment of the soil. Evaluation scores do not represent absolute measures or values. Use the card in more than one spot on your field to obtain a more representative assessment.

For help in using this card or if you have any questions regarding it, please contact your local NRCS Office:

Telephone # ___________________________
Fax # ______________________________

Field Notes
Current field management (tillage, fertilizer, irrigation, crop rotation, other) ______________________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
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________________________________________

Ideas for changes in field management
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________________________________________
________________________________________
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NRCS Soil Quality Card

Date: ___________________________  Crop: ___________________________
Field location: ___________________________  Year of planting: ___________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Preferred Observations</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Soil Structure</td>
<td>Hard with no surface residue. Powdery when dry, crust easily after a hard rain. Large, hard clods, very hard to prepare seed bed.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Biological Activity</td>
<td>Very old residue that doesn’t decompose; no sign of soil life (insects, worms, etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Erosion</td>
<td>Signs of severe wind stress or gullies throughout field</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Soil Test Organic Matter</td>
<td>Downward trend &lt;0.6% organic matter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Soil Compaction</td>
<td>Hard pan stops roots, roots grow laterally</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Plant Health</td>
<td>Yellow, thin stalks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Residue</td>
<td>Little or no surface residue, few roots in subsoil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Infiltration</td>
<td>Ponding visible</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Water Holding Capacity</td>
<td>Crops wilt quickly after water events</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How to use the card

1. Enter date, location, crop, and soil moisture level in the assessed field.
2. Use a shovel or a soil probe to probe the soil. Rate each indicator on a scale from 1 to 10. Refer to the rating guide to determine the score for each indicator.
3. Record your observations. Review and evaluate your scoring.
4. On the back page, write down current management practices. Record ideas for changes in management that you will implement as a result of your assessment.