

MO-03 Technical Note

Date: November 15, 2006

Subject: Guidance for downloading and editing OSDs

Official Soil Series Descriptions (OSD) are the standard for soil series in the U.S. system of soil classification known as Soil Taxonomy. Since about 1995 OSDs have been available to soil scientists and the general public on the World Wide Web using formatted HTML source code. We often view and print these highly formatted documents in our work because they are easier to read than text-only versions of the OSD. These HTML files have several font sizes, bold section headings, and hyperlinked names of other soil series. Although these HTML files are useful for some aspects of our work, they cannot be used to reprocess the OSD, since they do not meet the rigid standard needed to pass the PERL processing program on the database server in Fort Worth. Many soil scientists have downloaded these HTML files by viewing individual OSDs with their web browsers from the “View OSD by Series Name (with best-match feature)” webpage and then choosing the “save as” option to save the file with either a .doc or .txt extension. Using a .doc extension will save most of the HTML formatting code while using a .txt extension will strip it out. However, regardless of the file extension used, such a file will still not pass the OSDCheck program for uploading to the database server. The correct way to download OSD files is to use the ftp procedure described below. The proper way to edit these documents is also described in this guidance as well as helpful tips to make your work easier. Any OSD submitted for processing to the MO not following this guidance will be rejected and returned to the originator for correction. Please carefully read and follow this guidance. If you do not understand something in this document, please call your SDQS. Learning and using this guidance will save you and your Soil Data Quality Specialists much time and frustration.

Checking OSD version

You must ensure that you are using the most current version of the OSD for your revisions. The risk in not using the most current version of the OSD is that an out-of-date file will be processed and will overwrite valid revisions that were already made for other reasons or by other soil survey staff. This is careless and counter productive. To avoid this happening, Do not download the OSD files until you are ready to enter your revisions in a timely manner. A “timely manner” is just a few days lag time at best. If you edit an OSD file for a commonly used series that you downloaded even a month ago (let alone several years ago), it may have been processed at least once since you downloaded it. Any revised OSDs we receive for processing that were not made in the most current version of the series file will be rejected and returned to the originator for correction.

If you need to verify the date the OSD was last processed you can check this by using the webpage at the following URL: <http://ortho.ftw.nrcs.usda.gov/cgi-bin/sc/scname.cgi>. Enter the soil series name in the dialog box and click the process button. The resulting page will look like the image shown in Figure 1, using the Domehill series as an example. The most important date to consider is the one named “Date Description Updated”. This date is a day with the format of month/day/year (e.g. 06/08/2006). As the narrative in Figure 1 explains, this is the day the OSD document had any change made. To ensure you are not revising an obsolete

version of the OSD (one that precedes the above date), download your OSDs only when you can enter your revisions promptly. After you have completed the revisions, do not delay in sending them to the SDQS for review and processing.

Downloading Procedure

Here is the procedure to download OSDs needing revision or to use as templates to draft new OSDs:

A.) On the main webpage for Official Soil Series Descriptions there are four links to Data Base Access. The second link named "View OSDs by List of Series Names (with FTP option)" is used to download series. Click this URL (or copy it into the Location field on your web browser: <http://ortho.ftw.nrcs.usda.gov/cgi-bin/osd/osdlist.cgi>. See Figure 2.

B.) The next page is named "Official Soil Series Descriptions View by List". Enter soil names in the list box vertically (with only one name per line) on the left side of this page. You can enter as many soil names as you need. You can also copy a list of series names generated from NASIS component list reports and then paste them into the name box. Some reports on the MO3 NASIS site that generate these lists of component names are "EXPORT - Series used list" and "MUG - NV - Component listing". Just run these reports on your selected set (which may be an entire survey area), save the report to your local drive, open the report in MS-Word, select the whole list (Ctrl+A), and copy the list into memory (Ctrl+C). Then go to the "View by List" webpage and paste the names into the list box (Ctrl+V) and click the Process button. See Figure 3.

C.) The next page will give you the option to either view the OSDs by clicking the "View Description" buttons or beginning the ftp download process. Click the hyperlinked (colored) FTP icon that ends the sentence "This set of descriptions may be downloaded via FTP". See Figure 4.

D.) The next page gives you options to select the format to receive the file in. There are two sets of choices. In the top choice list, accept the radio button of the first option labeled "zip file". This option is selected as the default. In the bottom choice list, click the radio button of the second option labeled "DOS and MS Windows". Then click the Download button. Note that this download button creates the compressed (zip) file on the web server but it does not yet begin the ftp process of the file back to your computer. See Figure 5.

E.) The next page gives you the file size and a hyperlink to the name of the created file which is always called "osd.zip" based on the checked options selected in step 4. Follow the page instructions to begin the download to your system by either clicking or right-clicking on the osd.zip hyperlink (if using Internet Explorer) and either clicking the Save button from the File Download window or choosing the "Save target as" option from the popup dialog box. If using Netscape you can shift-click by keeping the shift key pressed down as you click with your mouse on the file name. See Figures 6 and 7.

F.) You should now have a "Save As" dialog box that lets you put the zip file where you want it on your computer. Just navigate through your computer's directory structure to decide where you want the file placed. You can even rename the file if you want to. Then click the "Save" button. See Figure 8.

G.) If using Netscape as your web browser, the next thing you'll see is a Password Entry Dialog box. You don't need to enter a password in this field. Just click the OK button. You will then briefly see a "Savings Location" box with percent progress bars flash on your screen as the file is ftp'd from the server onto your computer.

Extracting Procedure

I.) At this point you can close or minimize your web browser and navigate to the place on your hard drive using Windows Explorer where the zip file was saved. Find the file named osd.zip (or whatever you renamed it to) and use the WinZip program to extract the OSD text files inside. Highlight the zip file and then right-click to bring up a menu with extract options. Choose the "WinZip" and "Extract to" options and you bring up the WinZip Extract window. See Figure 9.

II.) The WinZip Extract window has navigation options to have the program put the extracted OSD files where you want them. If identically named files already exist in your target directory, you should see a warning box asking whether you want to overwrite the existing files. See Figure 10.

III.) The extraction process takes just a few seconds and the individual files will quickly appear in your target directory. You can then delete the zip file since you no longer need it. The OSD files all have .txt extensions (e.g. alpineco.txt). See Figure 11.

Changing Default Program for Word Processing of Text files

If you double click the file name of these documents they will be opened into Microsoft Notepad, because Notepad is the default program for text (.txt) files on most PCs. So instead launch Microsoft Word, Click Open, and navigate to the directory where the files are. This works fine, but is cumbersome. To speed the process, you can change the default program used to open .txt files from Notepad to MS-Word. This is often very convenient if you are editing a lot of text files. To change your default program for editing text files perform the following steps:

- Open Windows Explorer
- Choose Tools > Folder Options > File Types
- Scroll down the list of registered file types and find "TXT file".
- In the part of the dialog box labeled "Details for TXT extension" there is button labeled "Change".
- Click the change button and a dialog box opens named "Open With". Find Microsoft Office Word and click OK and then click Close. See Figure 12
- Now when you double click any file with a .txt extension, MS-Word will be launched instead of Notepad to use as your word processor. You can always change this back to Notepad if you wish by repeating the steps above.

Editing OSDs using Microsoft Word

- a.) Now you are ready to enter your proposed revisions in the text files. Open the text file in MS-Word. Often the first thing you will see before the file actually opens is a “File Conversion” dialog box. Just accept the default option for Windows and click the OK button. Now choose Tools > Track Changes or simply double click the letters “TRK” in the status bar at the bottom of the window to activate the “track changes” feature. See Figure 13.
- b.) The track changes feature documents any additions or deletions you make in the OSD. To easily see the deletions you make, choose View > Print Layout. This will show your deletions off on the far right side of the window in a special small box. See Figure 14.
- c.) After you make your first change in the OSD you should immediately save your work. The track changes feature is special formatting and cannot be saved in a simple text (.txt) file. To save your work, you must save the proposed OSD revision into a new file with word formatting (.doc). Do this by choosing File > Save As. In the “Save As” dialog box, click the drop down arrow next to the “Save as type” box and choose “Word Document (*.doc)”. This saves your track changes revisions into a new file with a series name having a .doc extension (e.g. domehill.doc). The original text file will be unchanged and will close. Now you can continue entering all your other proposed revisions into the OSD and you can simply do periodic Saves to the new word document. See Figure 15.
- d.) After you have completed your proposed revisions, send the revised OSD (*.doc) to the SDQS in the Reno MO as a file attachment to an email message. If you have a bunch of OSD files with revisions you can create a zipped file to contain them all. Simply attach the zip file to your email. Most proposed OSD revisions are self-explanatory and are usually needed to expand or correct the range in characteristics or geographic setting sections. You should include comments on the rationale for some other revisions in the individual OSDs or in the body of your email message.
- e.) Please note the line labeled “MLRA OFFICE RESPONSIBLE” in the OSDs you have revised. There are 18 MLRA Offices (MO) for the country. Responsibility for soil series are assigned to these MOs and is based on entries in the Soil Classification (SC) database. The SC database is directly linked to the OSD documents for which MO is responsible. A change in responsibility cannot be made by simply editing the line in the OSD. The change can only be made in the SC database by SDQS on the staff of the MO which is responsible for the series. Changes in series responsibility do not happen without due cause. What this means to you is this: If an MO other than Reno, Nevada is the responsible office, you need to alert your MO3 SDQS to that fact. Tell the SDQS in your email message that certain of the revised series you are submitting for change (name them) are not ones that Reno is responsible for. Do not send revised OSDs for series owned by another MO directly to that office. The Reno SDQS are responsible for soil correlation and we need to see and approve the requested revisions whether we can process them or not. After we review and approve the revisions for the OSDs we will upload the MO3 series for processing. We will also forward revisions for series owned by other MOs to their respective SDQS with a request for processing if they think your changes are acceptable.

Figure 1. Results of query to Soil Classification database in “View by Name” webpage.

USDA-NRCS **SC View by Name** **Soil Survey Division**

DOMEHILL

Date SC Updated: 28-SEP-05
 MO Responsible: 3 (RENO, NEVADA)
 State Type Location: CA
 Series Status: E

Classification

Subgroup
 Soil Order: MOLLISOLS
 Suborder: XEROLLS
 Great Group: ARGIXEROLLS
 Subgroup Modifier: LITHIC

Family
 Particle Size: ASHY-SKELETAL
 Particle Size Modifier:
 Mineralogy: GLASSY
 CEC Activity:
 Reaction:
 Soil Temperature: FRIGID
 Other:

Series Dates

Origin Year: 2004
 Established Year: 2005
 Description Date: 06/2006
 Date Description Updated: 06/08/2006

States Using: CA NV

MLRAs Using: 26

Start Over

Document: Done

The “Date SC Updated” is the last date that the Soil Classification database (SC) was accessed by a SDQS. To change data elements such as taxonomic classification, series status, benchmark soil status, states using, or MLRA using. This date may be different (either older or younger) than the “Date Description Updated” described below.

The “Description Date” is the last date (mo/yr) that the OSD changed. It agrees exactly with the date displayed on line 5 of the OSD. This date will match either the “Date SC Updated” or the “Date Description Updated”, whichever is more recent.

The “Date Description Updated” is the last day that the OSD document had ANY change. The change may have been substantial or it may have been only a change in a data element linked directly with the SC database such as taxonomic classification, Series Status, or States Using. Note that “MLRAs Using” is not linked.

Figure 2. Main OSD webpage with links to other web pages.

Official Soil Series Descriptions (OSD) | NRCS Soils - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Links: Customize Links Google Magic desk NCSS Web Soil Survey Soil Data Mart SSL lab data Start NASIS with Citrix TRS-data (PLSS_lat-long) WebTCAS

Address: http://soils.usda.gov/technical/classification/osd/index.html

United States Department of Agriculture
NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

Soils Home About Us Soil Survey Soil Use Soil Education Photo Gallery Technical References Partnerships Contact Us

Search

Soils
 Enter Keywords GO

Technical References

Back to Technical References

Soil Classification

- Soil Taxonomy
- Keys to Soil Taxonomy
- Official Soil Series Descriptions (OSD)
- Soil Classification Database (SC)
- Distribution Maps of Dominant Soil Orders
- International Taxonomy Committees
- Soil Taxonomy Forum
- Rationale for Concepts in Soil Taxonomy

Find a Service Center

States and Regions

Official Soil Series Descriptions (OSD) with series extent mapping capabilities

[Introduction](#)

[OSD Fact Sheet](#)

Data Base Access

- [View OSD by Series Name \(with best-match feature\)](#)
- [View OSDs by List of Series Names \(with FTP option\)](#)
- [View OSDs by Query \(with FTP option\) New Changes!](#)
- [Soil Series Name Search](#)

Recommended Citation

When referencing the online Official Soil Series Description information in publications, the following citation is recommended:

Soil Survey Staff, Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Official Soil Series Descriptions [Online WWW]. Available URL: "http://soils.usda.gov/technical/classification/osd/index.html" [Accessed 10 February 2004].

Click this link for the FTP option

OSD View By List Trusted sites

Figure 3. OSD “View by List” webpage.

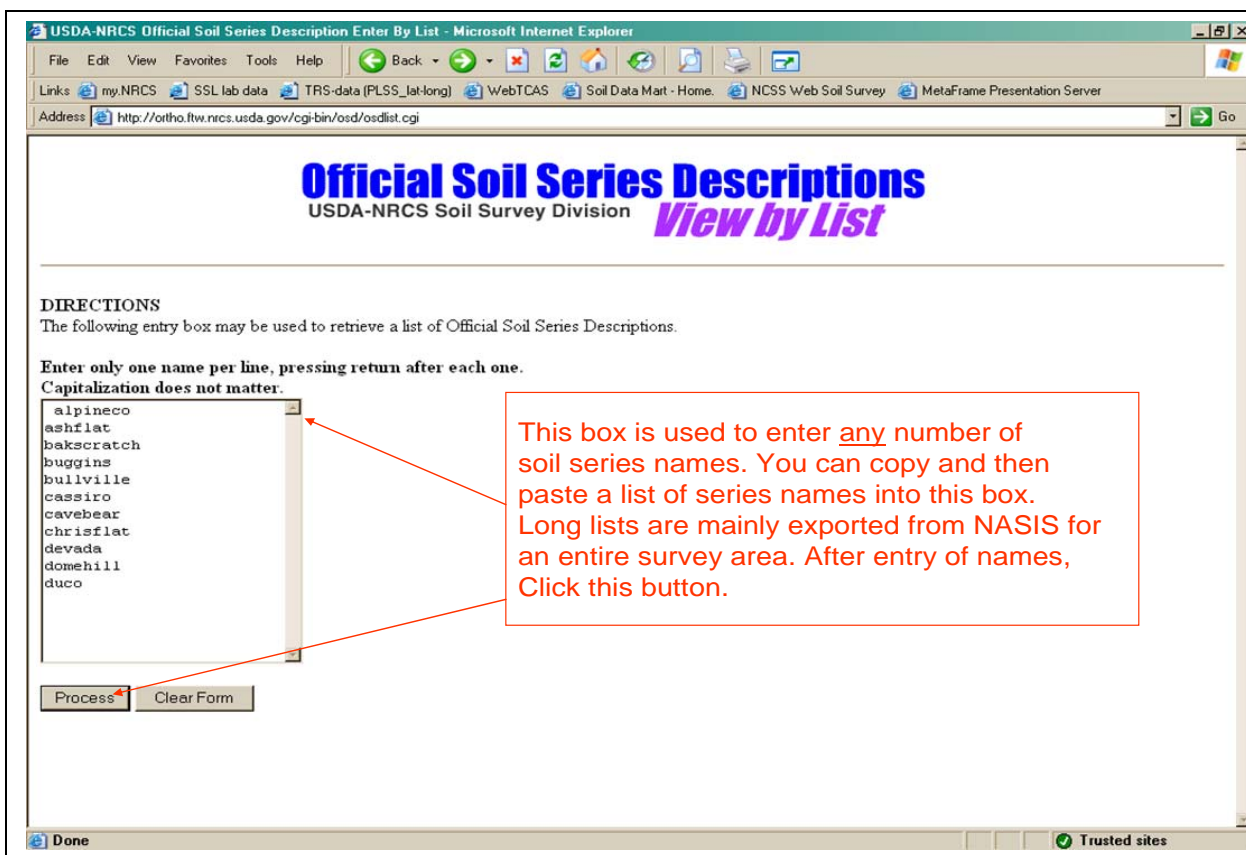


Figure 4. Webpage displaying query results of OSD database

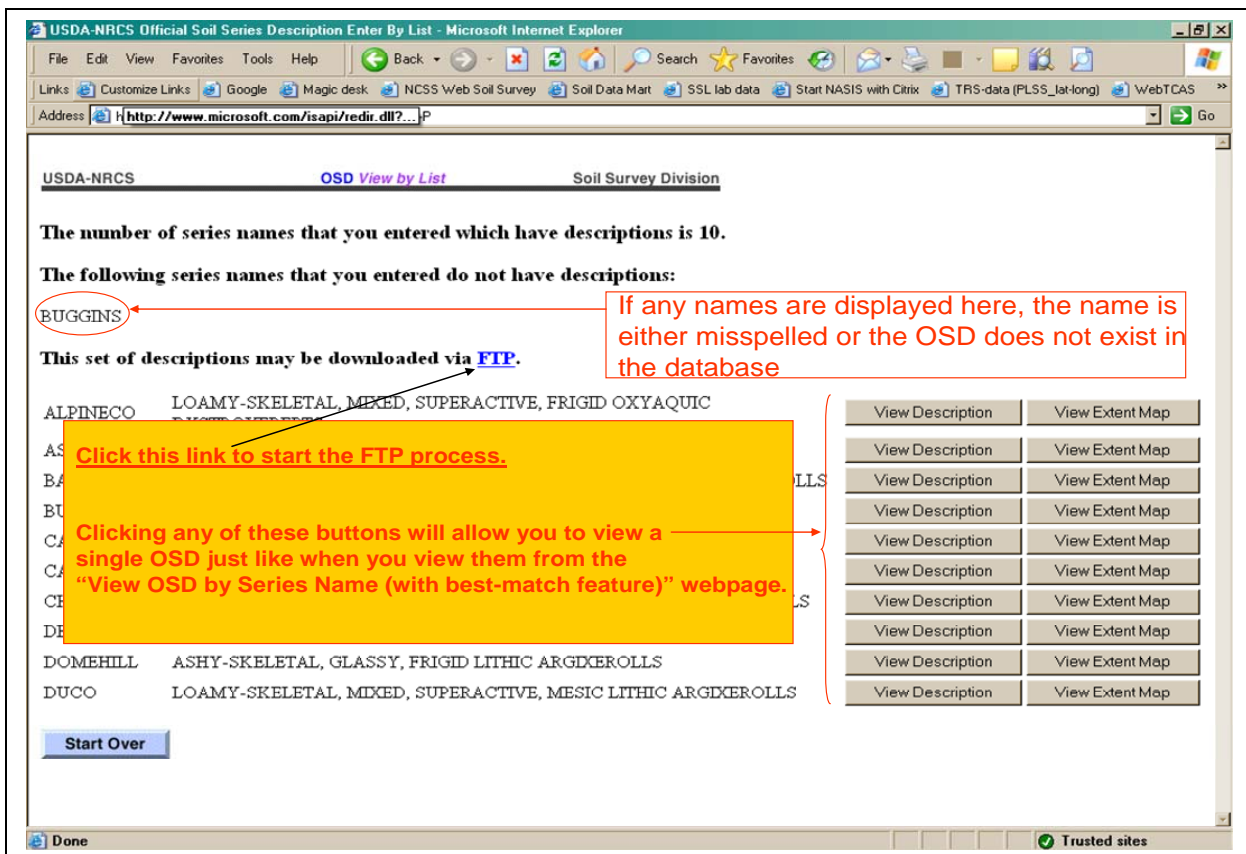


Figure 5. Webpage to set options for compressed file format

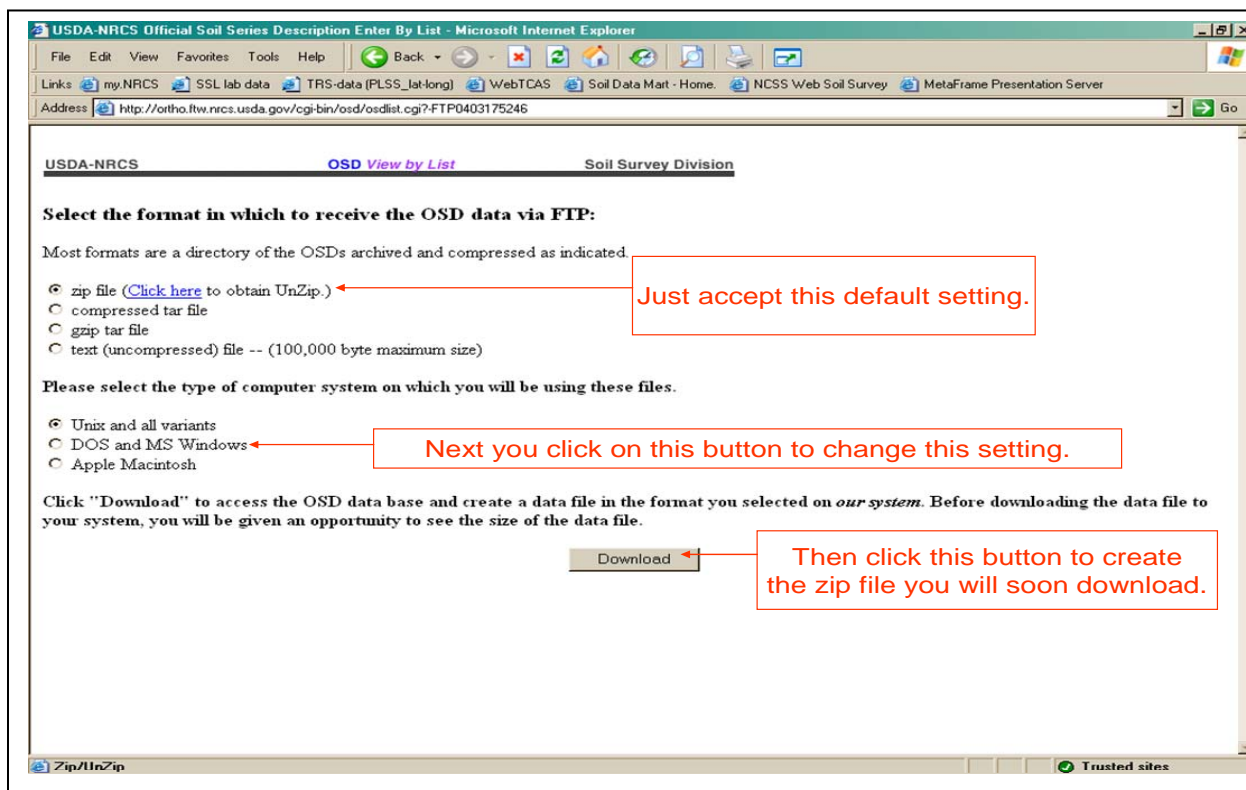


Figure 6. Webpage to start the download to your computer via FTP protocol.

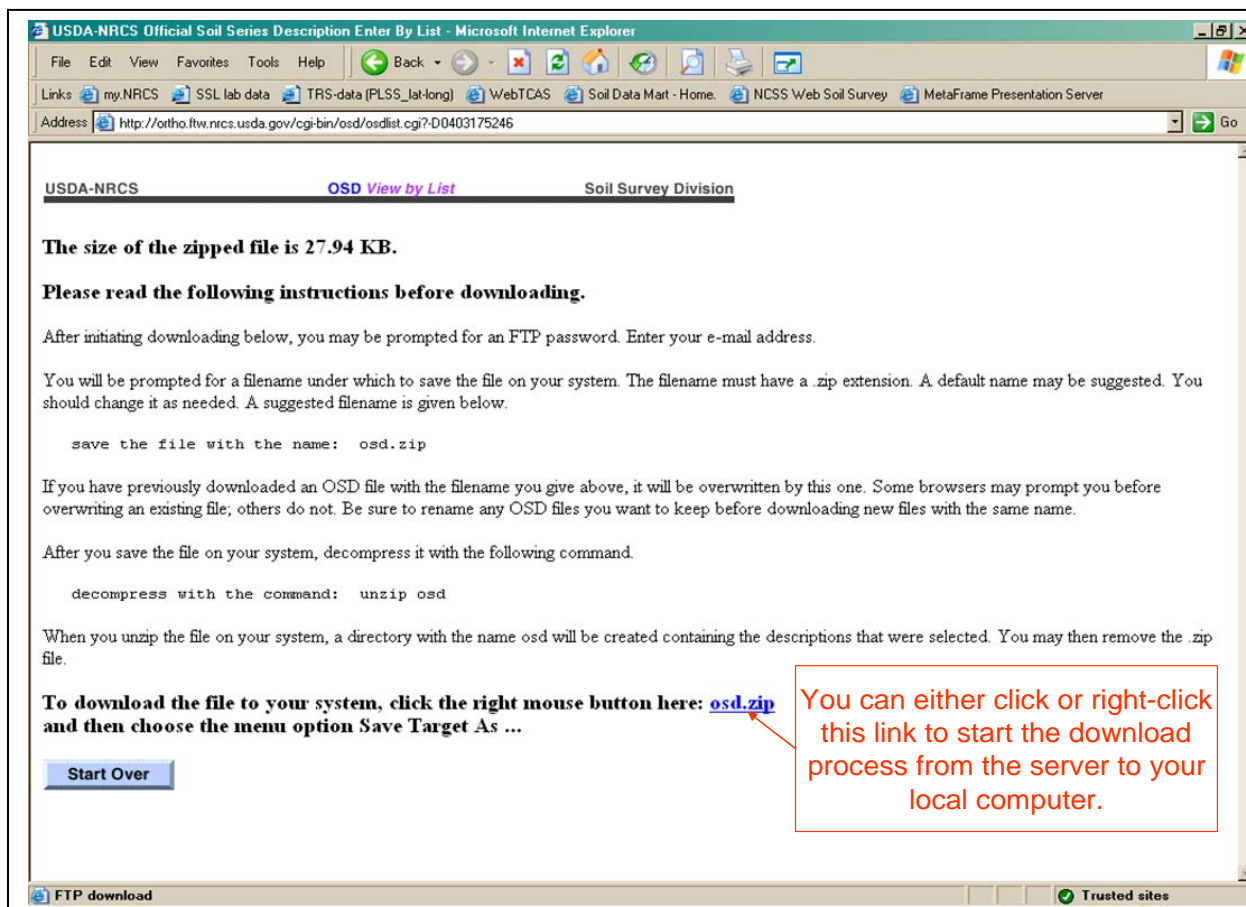


Figure 7. Screen showing file download box if using IE Explorer as web browser.

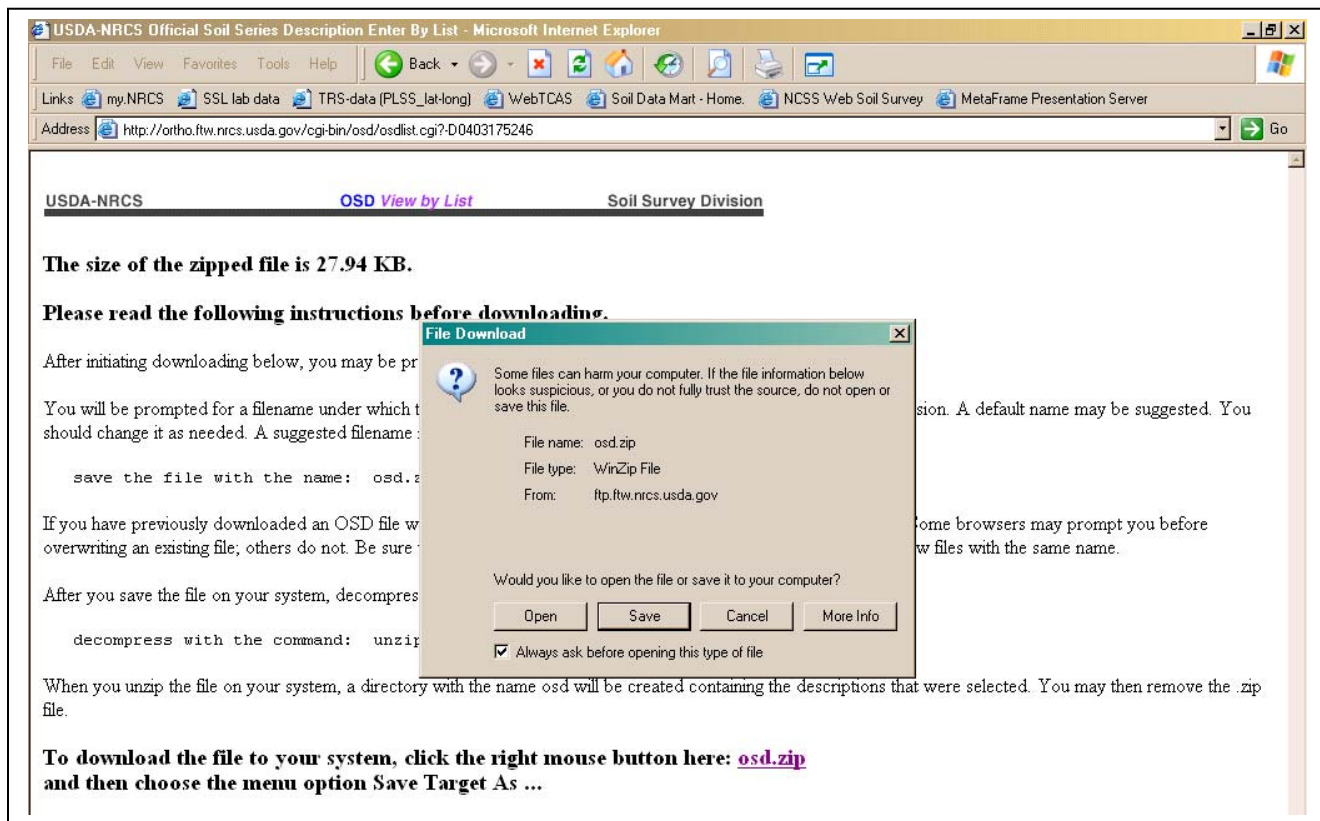


Figure 8. "Save as" dialog box if using IE as your web browser.

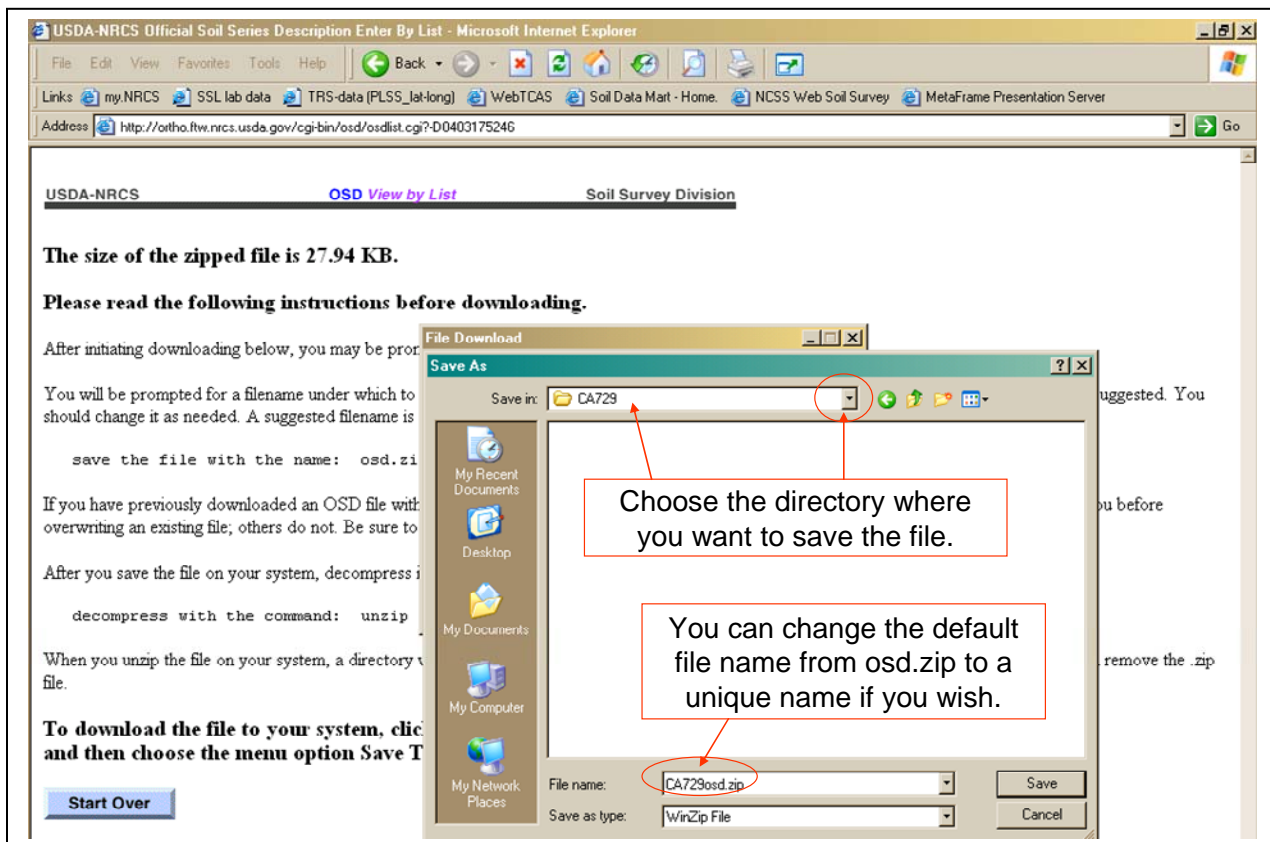


Figure 9. Using Windows Explorer to find OSD zip file on local computer.

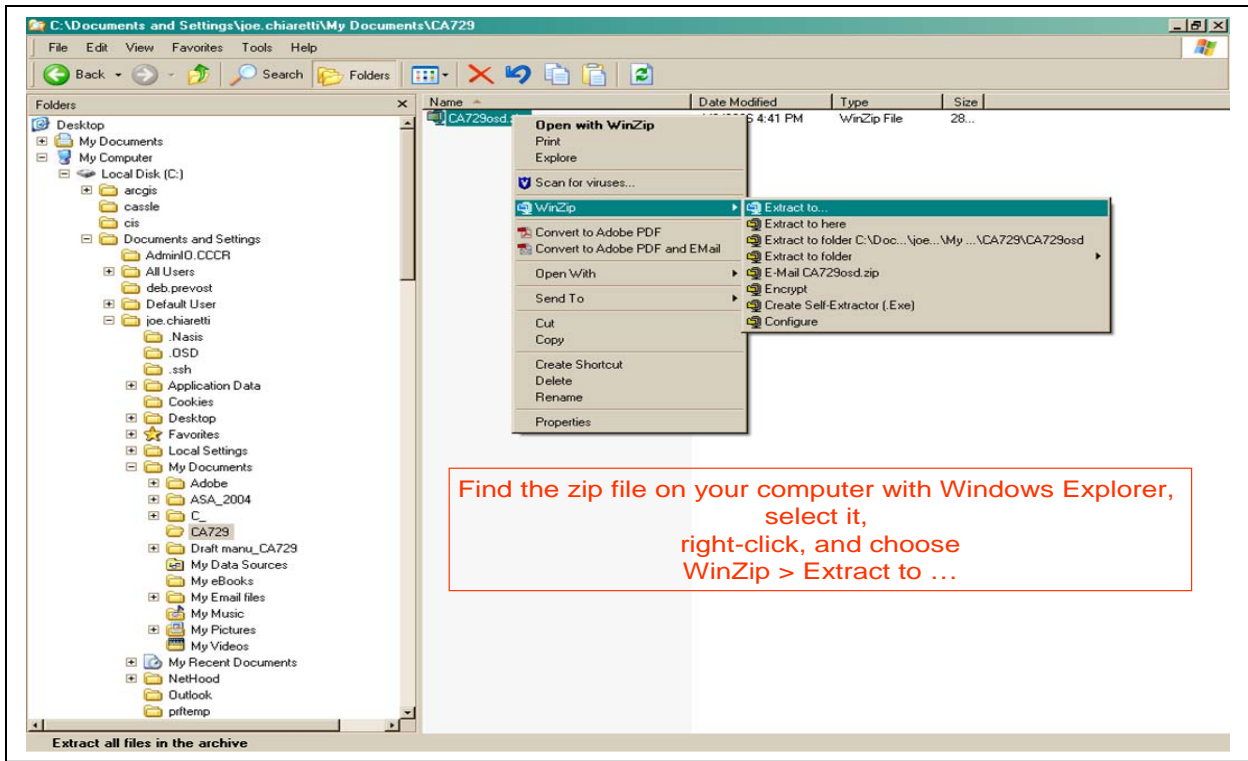


Figure 10. Using WinZip Extract to set options for extracting OSD files on local computer.

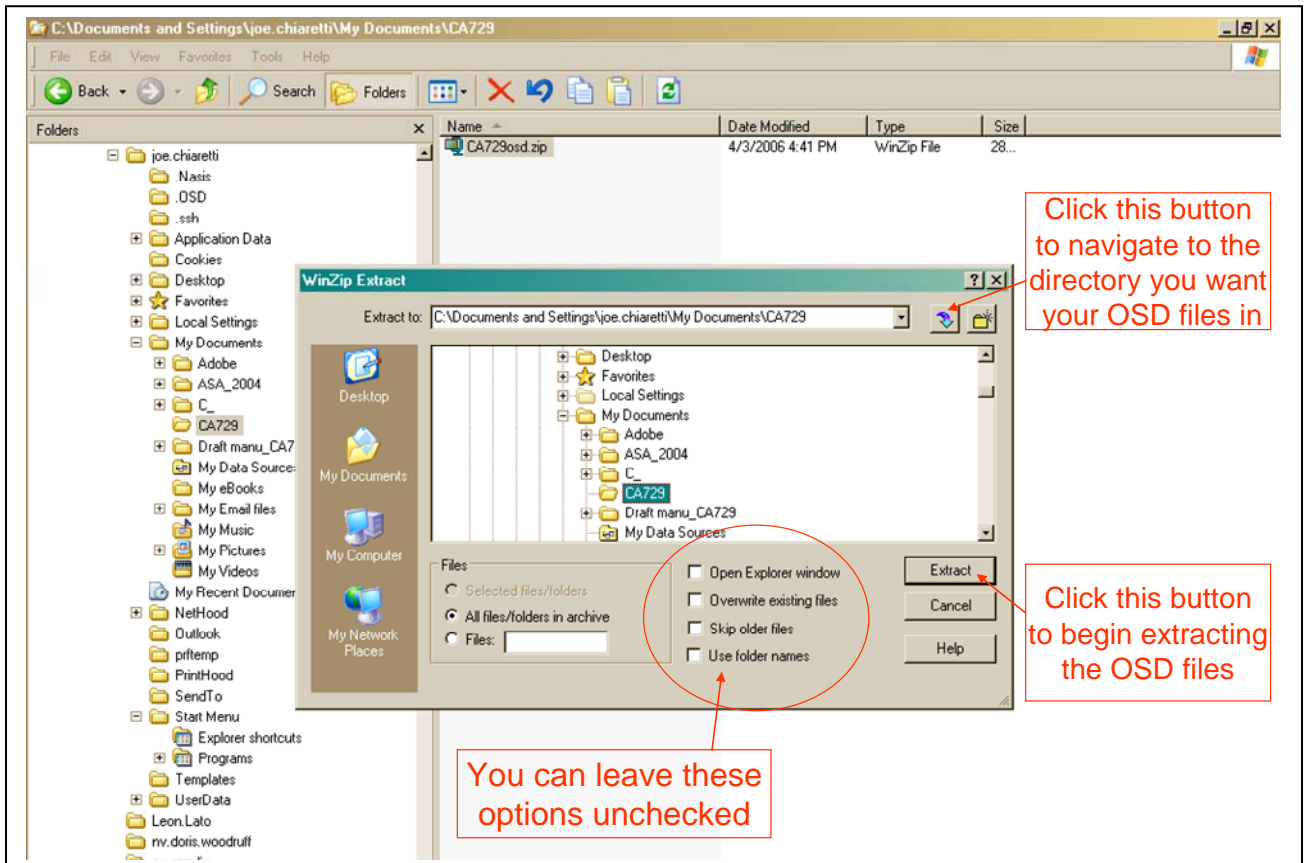


Figure 11. Directory with extracted OSD files.

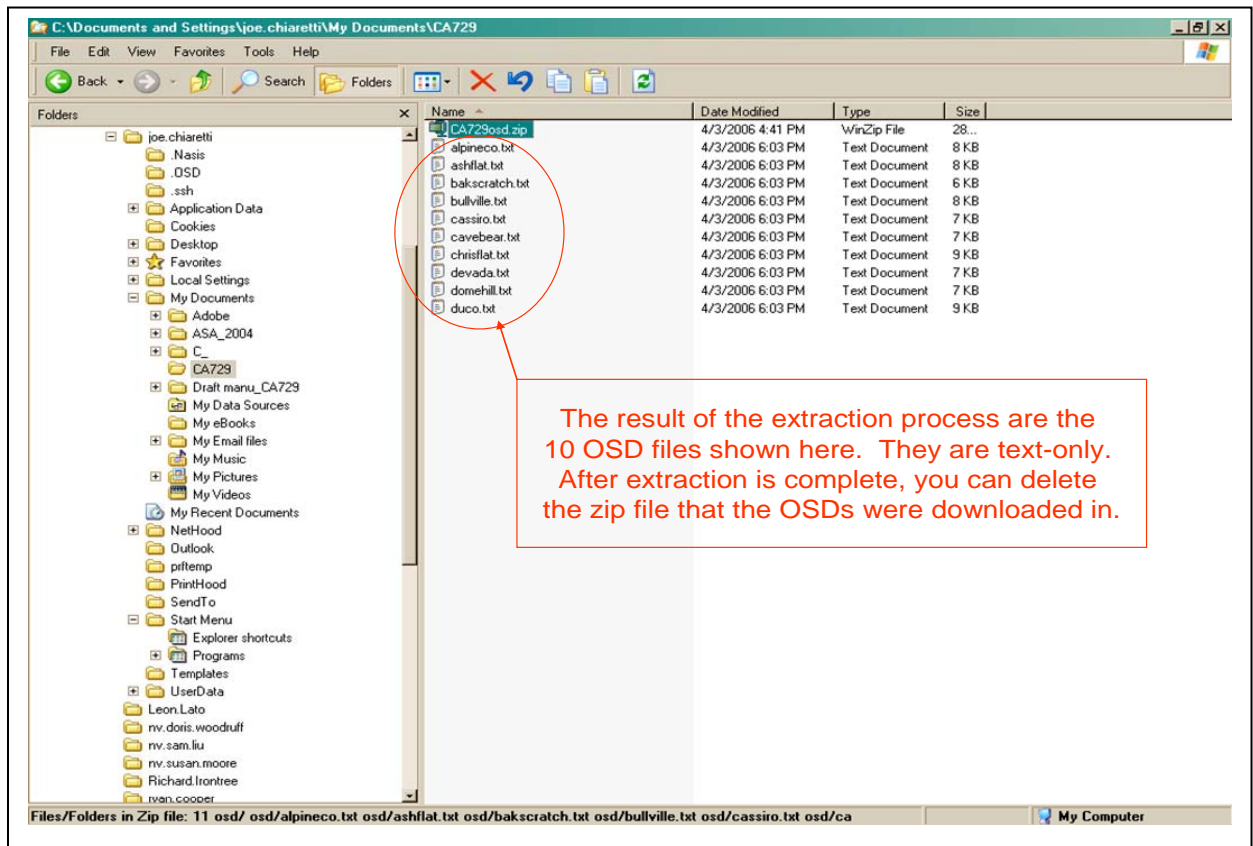


Figure 12. Changing default word processing program for text (.txt) files.

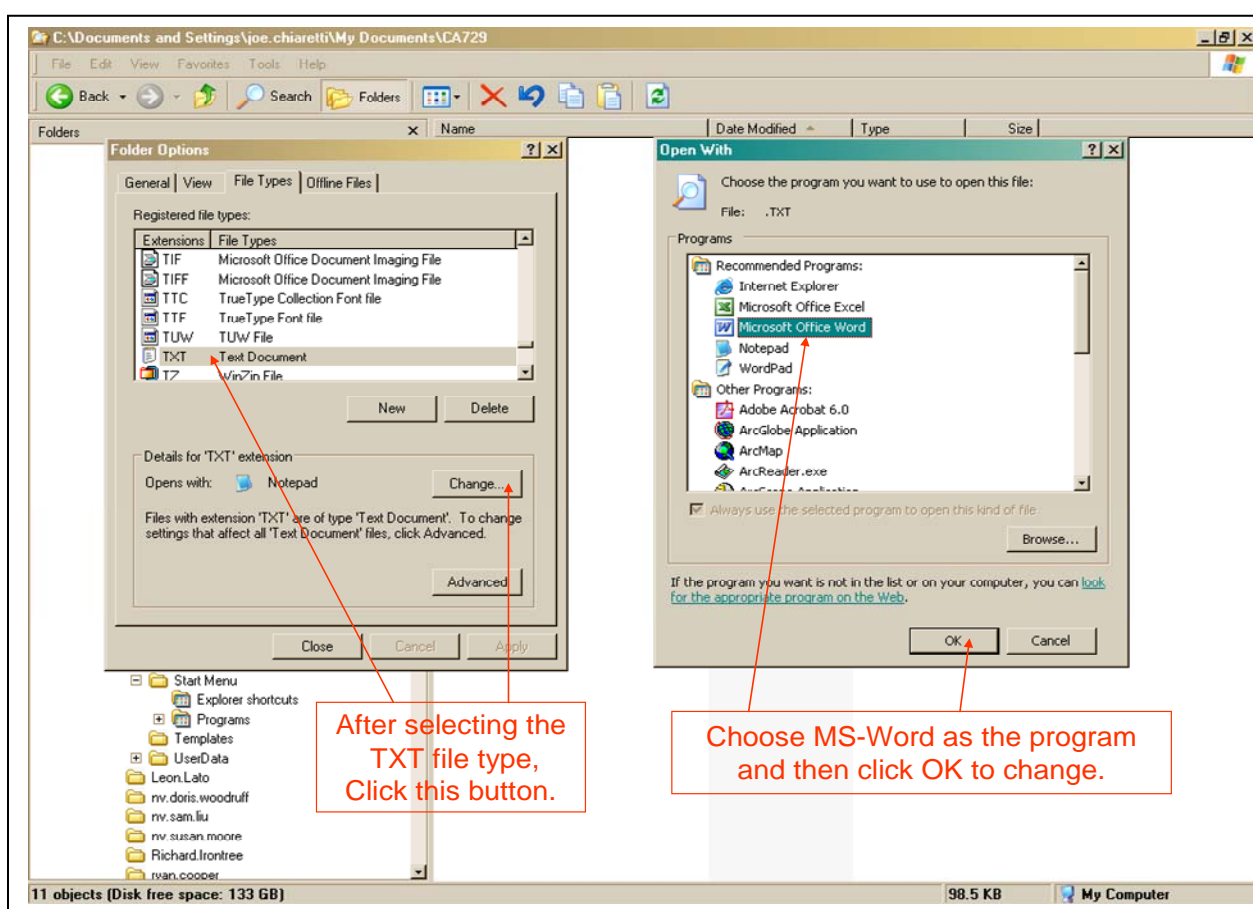


Figure 13. Activating the “track changes” feature of MS-Word.

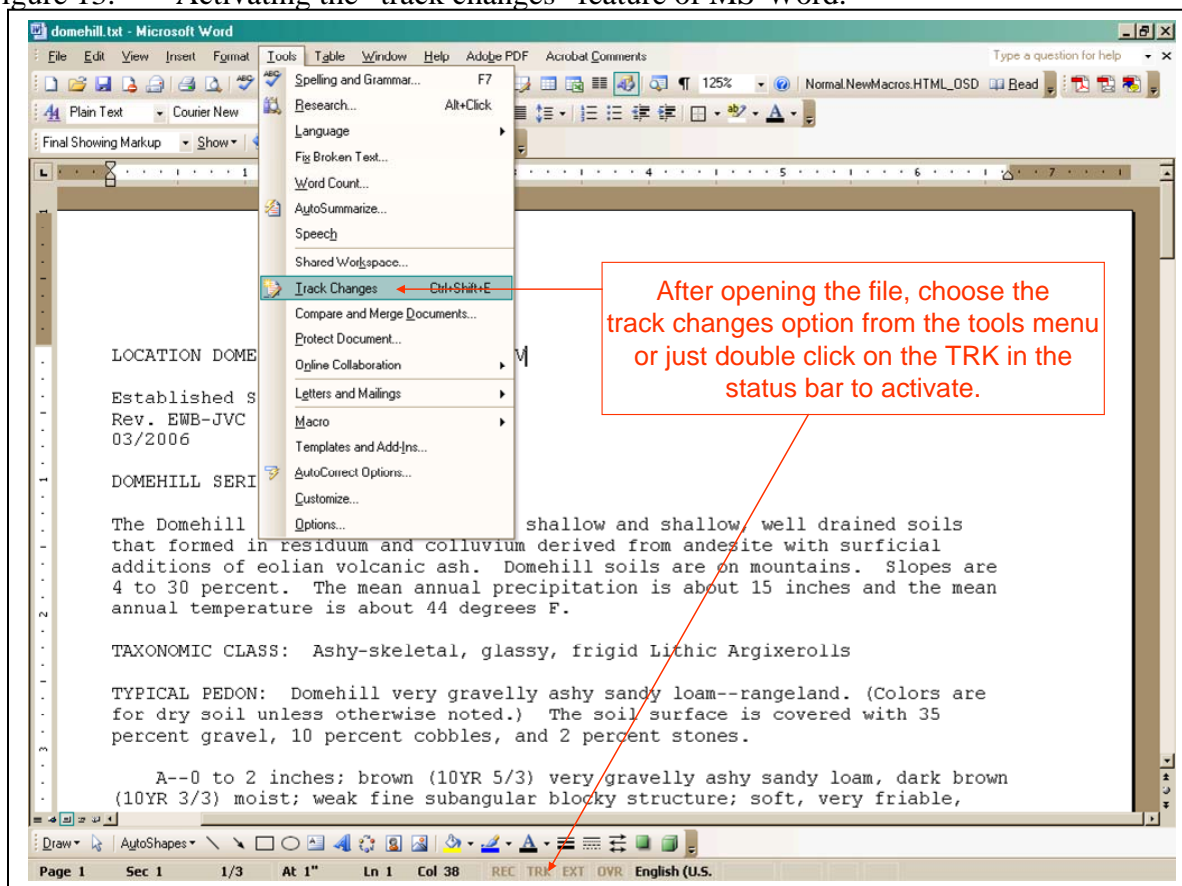


Figure 14. OSD file with revision made using “track changes” feature of MS-Word.

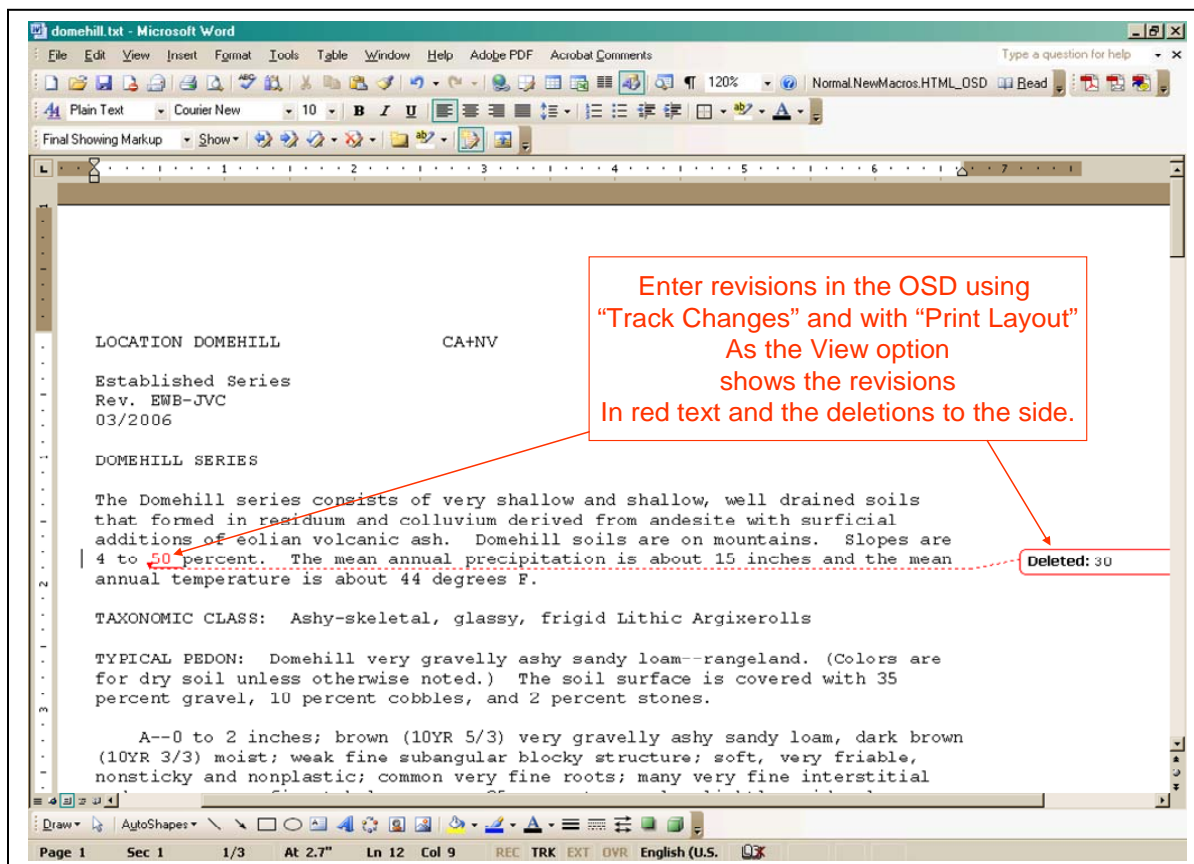


Figure 15. Using the “Save As” option to save track change revisions in a new Word doc.

