Fort Morgan MLRA Soil Survey Office

Future Farmers of America District Land Judging Contest

Purpose

The 2024 Future Farmers of America (FFA) District Land Judging contest was held at Northeastern Junior College in Sterling, Colorado, on March 27. Fifty-eight high school students participated in this year's contest. The contest was proctored by Area 2 Resource Soil Scientist Mary Ellen Cannon from the NRCS Area Office in Greeley, Colorado, and Soil Survey Leader Andy Steinert from the Fort Morgan MLRA Soil Survey Office.

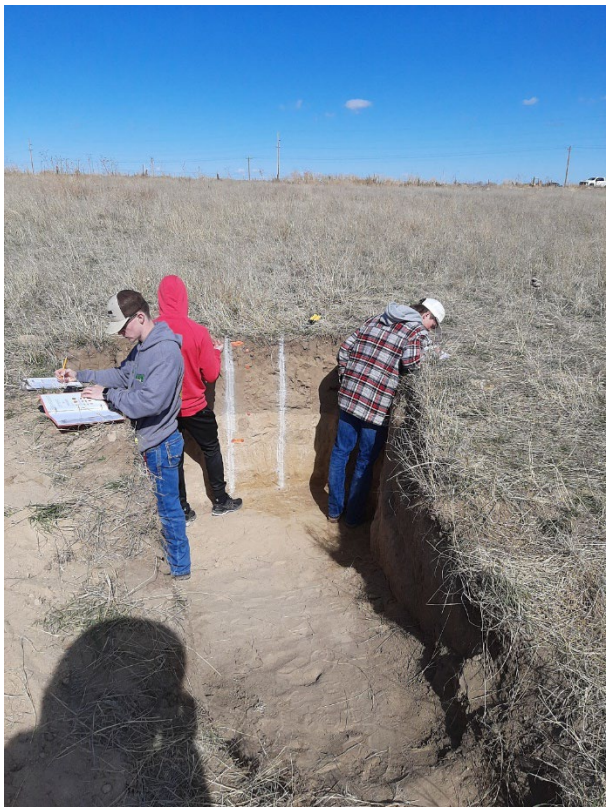
Background

The contest included a field session and a classroom session. The students started the day with the field session. They gathered soils information from two separate soil pits. At one pit, students answered questions relating to soil characterization and agricultural interpretations; at the other pit, students performed a homesite evaluation. After completing the field session, the students were bused back to Northeastern Junior College to complete the classroom portion of the contest. The classroom session required students to use Web Soil Survey to create a soil map and answer various questions about soil properties and the suitabilities and limitations of the soils.

Key Outcomes

These students are our future NRCS employees and customers as well as future stewards of the land. The schools and FFA organizations are our partners in educating our youth and the next generation of farmers, ranchers, foresters, soil scientists, and conservationists. These students will go on to feed the United States and the world.

Soils education supports conservation planning because soils, and the knowledge of them, are the basis for all conservation planning activities. A conservation plan should not be made without first looking at the soils. Teaching our next generation to understand the land is our best and most important step in our overall goal of helping people help the land.



Students collecting soil property data at the soil characterization and agriculture soil pit.

Students working diligently at the homesite soil pit gathering data to answer questions regarding the suitability of this site for building a home.

Students using Web Soil Survey to create a soil map that will be used to answer questions regarding soil properties and suitability and limitations of the soil.

Soil profile of the homesite soil pit, a fine, smectitic, mesic Pachic Argiustolls. This soil is located on the tread of a stream terrace of the South Platte River. Two alluvial deposits are visible in the soil profile, the first from 0 to 38 centimeters and the second from 38 to more than 140 centimeters.