



SOIL AND PLANT SCIENCE DIVISION

Technical Soil Services

Northeast Soil Survey Region

Grand Rapids Major Land Resource Area (MLRA)

Grand Rapids MLRA Soil Survey Office (SSO) Teaches Students About the Soil and Plant Science Division (SPSD)

Purpose

Grand Rapids MLRA SSO staff participated in a career conversation at Grand Valley State University (GVSU) to teach students about SPSP and encourage the pursuit of careers in the natural resource profession.

Background

On March 14, 2024, staff from the Grand Rapids MLRA SSO presented to an Introduction to Natural Resources Management class of approximately 50 students at GVSU in Allendale, Michigan. Matt Bromley, MLRA SSO leader, Greg Schmidt, Northeast Regional ecological data quality specialist, and Sydney Lance, MLRA soil scientist were invited to present by Todd Aschenbach, Natural Resources and Environmental Management professor at GVSU (fig. 1). Shared topics include Natural Resources Conservation Service, NRCS and SPSP history, education and career paths, overview of SPSP project types, and career advice for individuals wishing to enter the natural resources field upon graduation.

Key Outcomes

Through the career presentation, the Grand Rapids MLRA SSO reached students who are interested in the natural resource profession. The goal of the presentation was to provide insight on the government side of soil and ecological work while motivating GVSU students to pursue the Pathways program within SPSP either during or immediately following graduation.

Prior to class, the students generated three pages of questions based on the staff's biographies, ranging from professional advice to soil degradation, Geospatial Systems (GIS) technologies, and more. Following the presentation, students asked additional questions to learn more about future career paths within soils and ecology. The Grand Rapids MLRA SSO looks forward to additional collaboration with GVSU in the future.



Figure 1.—Matt Bromley and Greg Schmidt presented to an Introduction to Natural Resources Management class on March 14, 2024, to encourage the pursuit of careers in the natural resource profession.