



SOIL AND PLANT SCIENCE DIVISION

Technical Soil Services

Southwest Soil Survey Region

Minden, Nevada, MLRA Soil Survey Office

Soil Survey Training Provided to Local Nevada U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Staff

Purpose

Federal land management agencies, such as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), frequently use soil survey information as a tool for analysis, management, and planning. Over the years, these agencies have asked for training from soil survey staff in Nevada to better use and understand the information NRCS publishes. The Elko, Nevada, MLRA Soil Survey Office (MSSO) hosted two trainings in the eastern part of the State in the mid-2010s before the Minden office followed suit, offering our own soil survey training for BLM and USFS employees in 2019. The Minden MSSO planned on hosting this training every two years due to high demand, but these plans were put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic. In April 2024, the Minden MSSO was able to host an interagency soil survey training once again for our local Federal partners.

Background

The Minden MSSO conducted an interagency soil survey training from April 30 to May 1, 2024, which was attended by 17 USFS and BLM employees. SPSP Soil Scientists Chris Savastio, Jessica Castiblanco, Matt Cole, and Meghan Krueger and Regional Ecological Site Specialist Kendra Moseley were the instructors for the training. The trainees were mostly novice users of soil survey data. Their job responsibilities were wide-ranging, including general land health evaluations, fuel treatments, forest and range condition monitoring, mining analyses, and erosion mitigation in streambanks. A poll was sent out in advance of the training to get a sense of what information they hoped to learn in a soil survey course. Generally, the participants wanted to see a soil pit described, learn how to access data, understand and use various interpretations, use ecological and soils data to inform range health assessments, and learn about ecological site descriptions, which they were especially interested in.



Nevada BLM in Carson City hosted the training. The class spent the first morning in a classroom learning about soil mapping concepts and the afternoon at a location across the street from the classroom. For the outdoor portion of the first session, trainers went over soil pit descriptions, led a soil texture exercise, and introduced a strategy for determining soil components in the field using all available tools. On the second day, the class moved south to Carson Valley where the trainers showed students soil mapping across various typical landscapes found across the basin and range. Students used their shovels, Web Soil Survey reports, and various other tools to determine soil components for themselves, using the knowledge they learned the previous day and guidance from the NRCS trainers on hand.

Key Outcomes

Students of the 2024 interagency soil survey training walked away with a better understanding of soil survey data from the perspective of those who collect it. They learned the importance of managing for soil components and how to determine soil components in the field by reading the landscape, understanding the ecological site, and making direct observations of the soil itself. The Minden MSSO now has a template for offering this training again in two years with a few modifications based on feedback. We hope to be an example for other soil survey offices who may want to provide a similar training to their local Federal partners in the future.



SPSD Soil Scientists Jessica Castiblanco and Chris Savastio review soil description techniques at a Minden, Nevada, training location.