



SOIL AND PLANT SCIENCE DIVISION

Technical Soil Services

Southwest Soil Survey Region

Southwest Soil Survey Regional Office

Utah North Area Range Short Course Assistance

Purpose

Ecological Data Quality Specialist Sarah Quistberg from the Southwest Soil Survey Regional Office provided ecological site identification instruction and assistance to the Utah NRCS State Range Specialist during the Utah North Area Range Short Course. New range and soil conservationists in northern Utah attended the state-sponsored course from July 15 through July 17. Range and soil conservation planners need to be able to correctly identify the ecological site to determine the best conservation practices that can be implemented on rangeland.

Background

The Utah NRCS Range Short Course has been taught for many years to new range and soil conservation planners. However, this is the first time the course has been held since 2019. The Range Short Course is an essential part of providing field training in vegetation data collection for range conservation planning.

In the classroom, the instructors taught the participants how to find ecological site information through both Web Soil Survey and the Ecosystem Dynamic Interpretive Tool. The participants also reviewed how to identify the correct ecological site in the field in the classroom before the field visit.

During the field day, participants reviewed how to correctly identify an ecological site in the field and how to collect vegetation data for conservation planning (fig. 1). The instructors divided participants into groups. Each group selected a representative area and first dug a small soil pit to check soil texture, depth, and rock fragment content. Some participants were very enthusiastic and happy to get their hands on the soil.



Figure 1.—North Area Range Short Course participants discussing data collection methods on a ranch in Box Elder County, Utah.

Key Outcomes

Fifteen to 20 range and soil conservation planners attended the three-day training. The conservation planners all had less than 3 years employment with the NRCS. This training assistance is a great opportunity to for soil survey staff to meet the local field office staff and the state office staff.