



SOIL AND PLANT SCIENCE DIVISION

Technical Soil Services

Southwest Soil Survey Region

Tucson, Arizona, Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) Soil Survey Office (SSO)

Riggs Field Day

Purpose

The MLRA SSO staff in Tucson, Arizona, educated local students interested in agriculture by proctoring the soil and range stations during the Riggs Field Day event, which was held outside of Willcox, Arizona, on September 19, 2024.

Background

The Riggs Field Day event was held on the YY Ranch near the base of Chiricahua National Monument in southeastern Arizona. This was the 52nd annual Riggs Field Day and was hosted by the Willcox-San Simon Natural Resource Conservation District. The event provided students in Future Farmers of America, or FFA, an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of soils, forestry, wildlife, and range science. During the event, 72 students from 6 local schools participated. Students rotated through four different stations that tested their knowledge on soils and range plant identification.

Michael Piotrowski from the Tucson MLRA SSO ran the soil station, assisted by Chase Skaarer, Jerzi Hood, Natalie Bennett, and Calder Bethke of the Arizona Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) (figs. 1 and 2). Piotrowski also assisted Skaarer with the range plant identification station. After lunch, students were invited by staff to visit the outreach tent, where they were taught about the mission of the NRCS and possible future career opportunities.



Figure 1.—Jerzi Hood (left) and Natalie Bennett (right) stand in a soil pit and collect soil into sieves for soil texturing.



Figure 2.—(Left to right) Jerzi Hood, Jim Riggs, Michael Piotrowski, Calder Bethke, and Natalie Bennett pose for a photo in front of the soil pit.

Key Outcomes

The Riggs Field Day event brought together local organizations, businesses, and government agencies. Staff taught students about agriculture and natural resource stewardship and provided a better understanding of the NRCS mission and future career opportunities (fig. 3).



Figure 3.—Outreach pamphlets, mineral samples, and soil science tools displayed on a table.