SOIL AND PLANT SCIENCE DIVISION

Technical Soil Services

South Central Soil Survey Region

74th National Land and Range Judging Contest, May 1, 2025

Stillwater, Altus, and Woodward Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) Soil Survey Offices (SSOs)

Purpose

This year, 776 high school students from 199 teams from across the U.S. came to compete in the National Land and Range Judging Contest in El Reno, Oklahoma. The teams were part of Future Farmers of American (FFA) and 4-H chapters from 34 States. Staff from the Stillwater, Altus, and Woodward MLRA SSOs (fig. 1) along with the NRCS resource soil scientist in Oklahoma assisted the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts in putting on the National Land and Range Judging Contest. They provided technical assistance in land, homesite, and range evaluation to the high school students who were competing to be named the best land, homesite, and range evaluators.

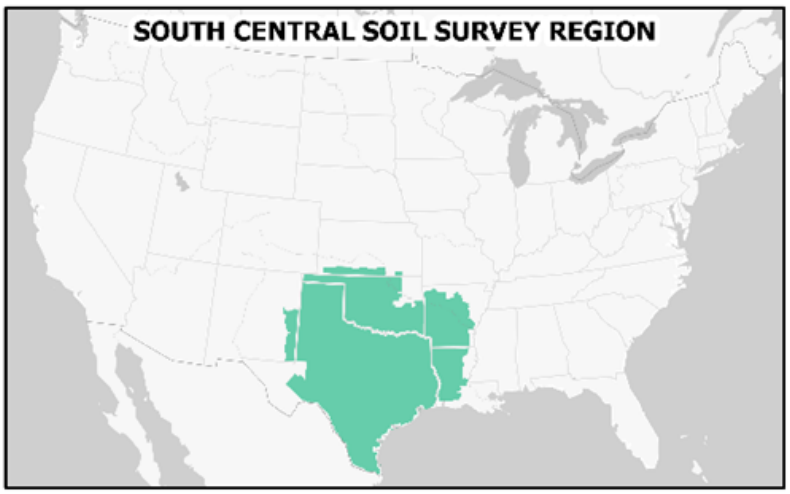

Figure 1.—Map showing the location of the South Central Soil Survey Region, which the Stillwater, Altus, and Woodward MLRA SSOs are part of.

Background

The students who participated in this contest won their State or area contests and had the opportunity to compete against other students from across the U.S. Two practice days were held so the contestants could come and learn the Oklahoma soils they would be judging on contest day. MLRA soil scientists and the NRCS Oklahoma resource soil scientist worked with the students in the pits. They helped them pick out the subtle breaks in the surface and subsurface and worked with them on the various soil textures from across the State so the contestants could see the variability between their soils and those in Oklahoma.

For the range contest, range ecologists, soil conservationists, and district conservationists with range backgrounds from NRCS Oklahoma set up and ran the range sites in the practice and contest.

Key Outcomes

On contest day, the soil scientists prepared the 12 pits for judging (fig. 2). They then served as pit monitors for the contest to ensure that everyone was following the rules. For the contest site, there were four fields with three pits per field (fig. 3). The FFA groups were split into odd and even groups. Two of the three pits in each field were identical, and these went to the FFA groups; the third pit in each field went to a 4-H group. In general, the slope was the same for the three pits in each field and information on the site information cards was the same for all pits.

Team Winners for Each Division

FFA Division

- Land 1st place: Tishomingo FFA (Oklahoma)
- Homesite 1st place: Glen Rose FFA (Texas)
- Range 1st place: Jacksboro FFA (Texas)

4-H Division

- Land 1st place: Tri-County 4-H (Indiana)
- Homesite 1st place: Shenandoah County 4-H (Virgina)
- Range 1st place: Oliver County 4-H (North Dakota)

Figure 2.— Flags and string mark off an area to remain untouched during the contest.

Figure 3.—Contestants walking through pits and filling out cards after evaluating the pit and landscape.