



Soil and Plant Science Division Technical Soil Services Southwest Soil Survey Region

Youth Wildlife Conservation Experience at the 2026 Sheep Show

Minden, Nevada, Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) Soil Survey Office (SSO)

Purpose

In August 2025, the Wild Sheep Foundation's Youth Education Coordinator Dr. Ryan Brock reached out to ask the Minden MLRA SSO to support the Youth Wildlife Conservation Experience (YWCE) by running a station to educate students about soil and conservation. The purpose of the YWCE, which is part of the Wild Sheep Foundation's annual gathering, the Sheep Show, is to educate children about conservation while fostering a love for the outdoors. School groups and homeschool students from around the state of Nevada attend the event for free.

Background

Held on January 22 and 23, 2026, the YWCE included over 40 hands-on stations involving archery, fishing and fly tying, insects, nature crafts, rock climbing, soil activities, and more ([Wild Sheep Foundation](#)). Staff from the Minden MLRA SSO have supported the event for the past 5 years, so they set up multiple activities to inspire the students to learn more about soil and conservation (fig. 1).

Minden MLRA SSO staff set up an interactive station featuring soil profiles and an inflatable soil tunnel covered with images and descriptions of soil properties. Students had the opportunity to create unique soil profiles using sand, silt, clay, and organic horizons (fig. 2). This activity increased the students' understanding about soil and soil formation. The soil tunnel provided what can be described as an underground exploration experience for students as they learned about soil organisms and structural aggregates only seen beneath the soil surface (fig. 3).



Figure 1.—Soil Scientists Meghan Krueger and Matt Cole (background) explain how to create soil profile necklaces and provided the materials to students while Soil Scientist Jessica Castiblanco (foreground) points to visual examples of soil profiles across the United States.



Figure 2.—Students learn about soil formation and soil terminology while creating soil profiles.



Figure 3.—Students learn about soil properties while exploring the soil tunnel.

Key Outcomes

By participating in the YWCE event, Minden MLRA SSO staff helped to bridge educational gaps about the importance of soil and conservation efforts by teaching more than 500 students and their teachers. Students visiting the station learned that soils form in layers called horizons, that soils consist of sand, silt, and clay, and that soils are different across the landscapes. The Wild Sheep Foundation's commitment to conservation and youth is inspiring. Minden MRLA SSO staff members look forward to supporting YWCE events in the future and connecting with the next generation of soil scientists and conservationists.

The event also provided an opportunity for collaboration among staff from the Minden MLRA SSO, Nevada State Office, and Minden, Nevada, Field Office to build rapport with colleagues and to gain a better understanding of individual and team strengths that make up the NRCS. Staff from the NRCS Nevada Field and State Offices contributed their support to ensure the event was a success. Staff from the Nevada State Office helped to set up the station and provided tables and handout materials while staff from the Minden, Nevada, Field Office helped students create soil profiles (fig. 4).



Figure 4.—Soil Scientist Jessica Castiblanco (left) and NRCS Nevada State Public Affairs Specialist Heather Emmons (right) staff a table covered with handout materials.