USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Soil and Plant Science Division

Technical Soil Services

South Central Soil Survey Region

Land Judging and Homesite Contest at Long Acres Ranch

Rosenberg, Texas, Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) Soil Survey Office (SSO)

Purpose

Staff from the Rosenberg MLRA SSO cooperated with members of Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Master Naturalists, Texas Master Gardeners, Texas A&M AgriLife, and the Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute for an FFA Career Development Event (CDE) at Long Acres Ranch in Fort Bend County (fig. 1). Seven Lakes High School in Katy, Texas, hosted the event where high school students competed in different categories for scholarship opportunities totaling $42,000. In preparation for the CDE, Soil Scientists Scott Cardenas and Stacey Kloesel located and described the soil pits for the land judging and homesite contests.

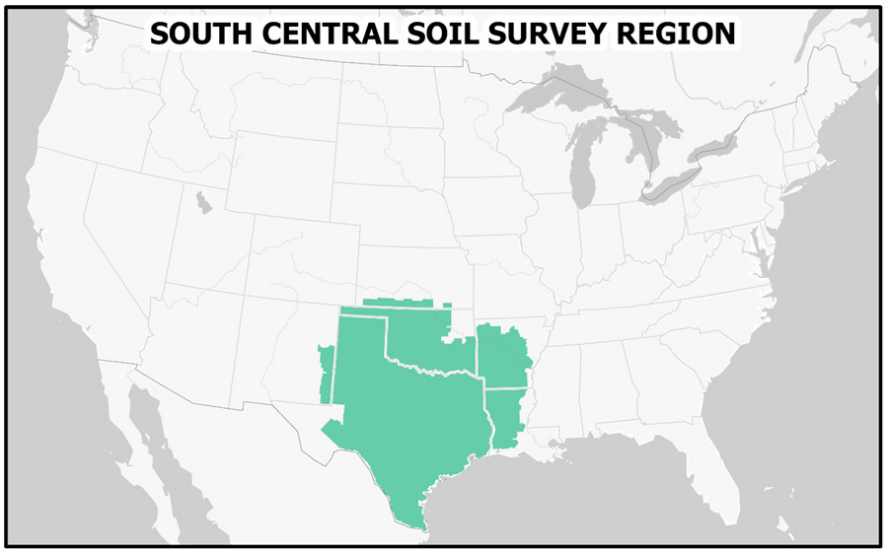

Figure 1.—The Rosenberg MLRA SSO is in the South Central Soil Survey Region.

Background

Before the event, Cardenas and Kloesel identified four sites for the contests and one backup site, choosing locations that offered a variety of landscapes and soil properties (fig. 2). At each site, NRCS soil scientists evaluated the soil pit for the homesite and land judging scoring. They evaluated soil texture, structure, consistency, depth, slope, and erosion at the five soil pits to help decide infiltration rate, runoff potential, permeability, and site drainage. After documenting all the factors, Cardenas and Kloesel created scorecards for the contest (figs. 3 and 4).

Figure 2.—Pink flagging tape indicating the boundaries of the contest profile for each soil pit.

Figure 3.—Scott Cardenas and Stacey Kloesel describing the soil pits for the contest.

Figure 4.—Scott Cardenas and Stacey Kloesel working together to evaluate the soil pits for the contest.

Key Outcomes

This CDE challenges FFA students to experience real life soil challenges and increase their knowledge of agriculture. Future careers and college education are cultivated with agriculture related skills acquired at events such as this. For the land judging and homesite sites and pits portion, 112 high school students competed-between the two events. Some students walked away from the contest with scholarships, but all students walked away from the experience with an increased understanding of agriculture, leadership, and teamwork.