

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



NRCS Soil and Plant Science Division (SPSD) Staff Assist With 2026 Utah Envirothon

Richfield, Price, and Ogden, Utah, Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) Soil Survey Offices (SSOs)

Purpose

Utah State University Extension reached out to NRCS to host the soil and land use station at its annual Utah Envirothon. The Utah Envirothon is an environmental and natural resources competition that focuses on conservation problem solving, leadership experience, and academics. The event is designed for high school students. Nonpoint source pollution was the focus of this year's Envirothon. The SPSD staff representing the MLRA SSOs included Soil Scientists Miles Coker and Keith Crossland and Ecologists Matthew Jimenez and Sarah Quistberg. MLRA SSO staff demonstrated field methods to students and discussed how soil and land use relate to nonpoint source pollution.

Background

The event was held on April 16 and 17, 2026, in Salt Lake County at Tracy Aviary Nature Center at Pia Okwai. It serves as the Utah State qualifier for the national competition. Teams of high school students from all over Utah prepared for the competition over the course of the school year. Upon arrival, students were split into groups and rotated in 50-minute intervals between the soil and land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, and wildlife stations. They reviewed field techniques and methods and local nonpoint source pollution concerns. Students were given examples of the effects of nonpoint source pollution on local soils and its corresponding effects on the local environment. The winning team will advance to the national Envirothon competition in July, which will be held this year in Starkville, Mississippi.

Key Outcomes

Students developed practical skills in soil analysis by determining soil pH (fig. 1), using a compass and clinometer, texturing soil, and identifying soil color with the Munsell color book (fig. 2), all in a field setting. The Envirothon promotes an understanding of complex ecological issues and educates students about possible careers in natural resources.



Figure 1.—Miles Coker, Price, Utah, MLRA SSO soil scientist, demonstrating how to determine pH in the soil.



Figure 2.—Keith Crossland, Richfield, Utah, MLRA SSO soil scientist, demonstrating how to describe a soil profile.