



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

Nevada Rangeland Inventory and Soil Health Assessment

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

Purpose

The NRCS Nevada State Office reached out to NRCS Minden, Nevada, MLRA SSO staff for assistance in collecting inventory data related to whole farm assessment (WFA) for two Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP) applications received by the NRCS Elko, Nevada, Field Office. The two RPP applications required inventory data collection across 19 fields, totaling about 4,000 acres. Jessica Castiblanco Doney, soil scientist with the NRCS Minden MLRA SSO, assisted Chris Savastio, NRCS Nevada State soil scientist, and Terry Miller, NRCS Nevada State resource inventory coordinator, in Elko County from April 6–9 with data collection in support of the RPP.

Background

In March 2026, Elsie Childress, rangeland management specialist on the NRCS Minden Field Office staff, trained Savastio and Minden MLRA SSO staff on WFA data collection tasks for RPP. Cropland, rangeland, pastureland, and forestland all require different sets of forms for WFA.

Soil scientists in MLRA offices are uniquely qualified to complete the in-field soil health assessments, which involves digging a small soil pit and recording observations based on soil health indicators such as soil color, texture, structure, stability, surface cracks, roots, and pores. Soil scientists who attended this training were also trained to complete range inventory and wildlife habitat evaluations, which are among the other components of the required WFA documentation. Since this training, the Minden MLRA SSO staff have been available to help with data collection for the RPP through coordination with the NRCS Nevada State Office.

Key Outcomes

Savastio, Castiblanco Doney, and Miller were able to complete WFA data collection on the 19 fields in just 2 days, with a travel day on either end (figs. 1 and 2). In addition to completing inventory data collection for the RPP, Savastio, Castiblanco Doney, and Miller were able to assist one of the landowners who had questions about the sampling protocol and the newest guidance on Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity 216—Soil Health Testing, or CEMA 216, which is another requirement of those participating in RPP. Leveraging the skill sets of MLRA soil scientists helps NRCS Nevada provide technical soil services that directly benefit farmers.



Figure 1.—A cattle ranch in Clover Valley, Nevada, which is being considered for a prescribed grazing conservation practice.



Figure 2.—Soil Scientist Jessica Castiblanco Doney selecting the location for a pit to evaluate soil health indicators such as soil color, texture, structure, and stability as well as surface cracks, roots, and pores. Nevada’s Ruby Mountains are in the background.