

SOIL AND PLANT SCIENCE DIVISION

Technical Soil Services

South Central Region



Nacogdoches and Bryan, Texas, Major Land Resource Area Soil Survey Offices

Land Judging Competitions in Northeast Texas

Purpose

Members of the Nacogdoches and Bryan, Texas, Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) Soil Survey Offices assisted with the setup of three land and homesite judging competitions the week of April 3, 2023. The focus of land and homesite contests has been to provide students with a deeper understanding of how soil properties and their management can affect specific sites.

Key Outcomes

The team kicked off the week by helping the Crockett Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) office select sites for their event. Fortunate to be accompanied by Dennis Brezina, State Soil Health Specialist NRCS Texas, the group chose sites that would offer a challenging contest for students (see figure 1 and 2). Pockets of deep sand among the otherwise clay loam subsoil yielded variety.

The contest hosted by the Nacogdoches SWCD included a site that experiences flooding, along with steep upland, side slope of a creek bank, and ryegrass pasture pits. The various landscapes present provided great site and slope diversity.

Finally, the group travelled to Mt. Pleasant, Texas, to help the members of the NRCS field office and Northeast Texas Community College (NTCC) agricultural department set up their area contest. This event is held each spring at NTCC's agriculture farm and students across the East Texas area attend in hopes of placing amongst the top teams, procuring them the chance to attend the state contest in Stephenville, Texas, at Tarleton State University.

The week proved to be a race against the rain as storms rolled in and out of the East Texas area, making site selection more important than ever. As a result, most of the contests relied on slightly shallower, hand-dug pits that would lessen the threat of a deep water-logged hole that students could not access. From shallow water tables to eroded soils, each contest ran the gamut of possibilities, testing the mettle of even the most seasoned land and homesite judging contestant.



Figure 1. Soil scientists discuss site selection and contest conditions at the Crockett FFA Land Judging Contest.



Figure 2. Dennis Brezina (State Soil Health Specialist, NRCS Texas) and Sara Russell (Soil Scientist, Nacogdoches Soil Survey Office) creating the contest answer key.