



## SOIL AND PLANT SCIENCE DIVISION

# Technical Soil Services

## Northwest Region



### Fort Morgan, Colorado, Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) Soil Survey Office (SSO)

## SPSD Teaches the Next Generation at the 2023 Future Farmers of America District Land Judging Contest in Colorado

### Purpose

The 2023 Future Farmers of America (FFA) District Land Judging contest was held at Northeastern Junior College (NJC) in Sterling, Colorado, on April 11, 2023. Mary Ellen Cannon, Area 2 Resource Soil Scientist from the NRCS Area Office in Greeley, Colorado, and Andy Steinert, SSO Leader from the Fort Morgan MLRA SSO, proctored the contest which consisted of a field and classroom session.

### Key Outcomes

On a rare hot day in the spring with near record high temperatures, 57 high school students participated in the contest. The students started the day with the field session where they gathered soils information from two separate soil pits to answer questions relating to soil characterization and agricultural interpretations, in addition to performing a homesite evaluation (figures 1, 2 and 3). After completing the field session, the students were bused back to NJC to complete the classroom portion of the contest. In the classroom session, students used Web Soil Survey to create a soil map and answer various questions based on that map.

The local NRCS staff, FFA schools, and FFA organizations have developed a strong partnership to educate our youth and the next generation of farmers, ranchers, foresters, soil scientists, and conservationists. The NRCS staff teach our next generation to understand the land and our goal of *helping people help the land* as many of the FFA students are likely to become future NRCS customers and stewards of the land who will go on to feed to the United States and the world.



*Figure 1. Students determining soil texture and color at the soil characterization and agriculture soil pit (Photo by Andy Steinert).*



*Figure 2. Students work diligently at the homesite soil pit gathering data to answer questions regarding the suitability of this site for building a home (Photo by Mary Ellen Cannon).*



Figure 3. Soil profile of the soil characterization and agriculture soil pit, a fine-loamy, mixed, superactive, mesic Pachic Argiustolls (left). Soil profile of the homesite soil pit, a coarse-loamy, mixed, superactive, mesic Aridic Calcistolls; notice the large krotovina from 90 to 140 cm (right). (Photos by Andy Steinert).