



SOIL AND PLANT SCIENCE DIVISION

Technical Soil Services

Southwest Soil Survey Region and Arizona NRCS

Tucson, Arizona, Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) Soil Survey Office (SSO)

Riggs Field Day 2023 in Cochise County, Arizona

Purpose

On October 12, 2023, the Arizona-NRCS and Soil and Plant Science Division participated in a soil judging segment for the Future Farmers of America (FFA) program through the Willcox-San Simon Natural Resource Conservation District at David and Tina Thompson's C Bar Ranch (Riggs). The C Bar Ranch (owned by the Riggs family) is located at the foothills of the Chiricahua Mountains in Cochise County, Arizona. Riggs Field Day for FFA brought in federal agencies and local stakeholders to teach high school students applications in forestry, wildlife, range management, and soil science.

Background

Over 70 students from FFA were invited to participate in Riggs field day, and they cycled through four stations including forestry, wildlife, soil science, and rangeland health and vegetation. The U.S. Forest Service, the Arizona Department of Fish and Wildlife, local conservation districts, and NRCS ran the stations. At the NRCS soils station, FFA students determined runoff classes, soil depth, surface and subsurface soil horizons, soil texture and structure, soil chemistry, and soil nutrient calculations. The station was set up by Andreas Khechfe (Soil Scientist) and Mike Piotrowski (Ecological Site Specialist) from the Tucson MLRA SSO (figure 1) and Cary Lilly (Soil Conservationist) from the Willcox Field Office (figure 2).



Figure 1.—Mike Piotrowski, Ecological Site Specialist, (left) and Andreas Khechfe, Soil Scientist, (right) proctoring soils portion of the FFA event with students.



Figure 2.—Cary Lilly (red shirt), Soil Conservationist, from Willcox Field Office proctoring during the soils portion of the FFA event.

Key Outcomes

The NRCS elevated students' knowledge of soil science by sharing soils information through activities at the soil pit station. In addition, NRCS staff strengthened ties to FFA, partners, such as other government agencies and local conservation districts, at the event and the owners of C Bar Ranch who played a key role in the success of this event.