

SOIL AND PLANT SCIENCE DIVISION

Technical Soil Services

South Central Region

Hot Springs, Arkansas Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) Soil Survey Office (SSO)

Southern Arkansas University Future Farmers of America District Land Judging Contest

Purpose

During the second week of March 2024, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff assisted with the setup of the contest sites for the 2024 Future Farmers of America (FFA) District Land Judging Contest hosted by Southern Arkansas University. Justin Morgan, resource soil scientist from Arkansas NRCS, Larry Gray, MLRA soil survey leader, and Trevor Crandall, ecological site specialist from the Hot Springs MLRA SSO in Arkansas assisted by preparing sites, marking the soil pits, filling the buckets with soil from the surface and subsurface, and completing the official contest score cards. High school contestants determine surface and subsoil soil texture, soil depth, slope, and degree of soil erosion. From this information, they determine permeability, runoff, and land capability class (see figure 1). They also rate suitability and limitations for use. The students must also determine the necessity of plant nutrient and soil amendment applications.

Key Outcomes

Students gained experience in evaluating soil properties and determining interpretations for land use (see figure 2). Development of these skills fosters sound management of natural resources in future generations. Many NRCS soil scientists received their first exposure to a career in the field through 4H and FFA contests, and these events are important outreach and educational opportunities.



Figure 1.—A photo of students completing score cards for the 2024 FFA District Land Judging Contest.



Figure 2.—A photo of a contest site for the 2024 FFA District Land Judging Contest.

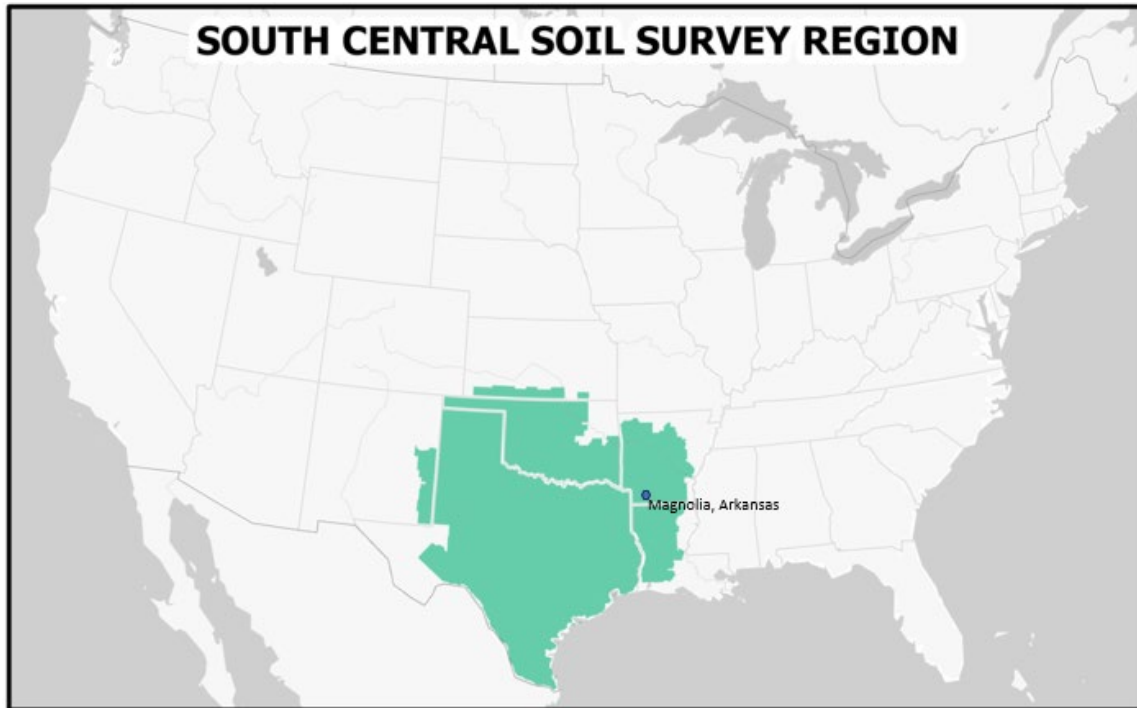


Figure 3.—A map of the South Central Soil Survey Region with the location of the 2024 FFA District Land Judging Contest.