

Soil Science Division

Soil Survey Region 6



Cookeville, Tennessee, Soil Survey Office

Soil Scientist Assists with Farm Days

Purpose

Major land resource area (MLRA) soil survey offices under the Soil Survey Division provide technical soil services (TSS) to NRCS State and field offices, partnering Federal and State agencies, and other groups to further assist with conservation functions and expand people's knowledge about soils. The scope of the service discussed here was to assist the local resource soil scientist from the Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Area 2 Office in providing soils information to young people.

Many school systems in Tennessee host annual Farm Days or Ag-in-the-Classroom events. The participants of these events are generally first grade students within a county. Participation ranges from about 800 to 1,000 students over the course of 2 days. The event's purpose is to expose students to all facets of agriculture, including animals, farm machinery, soils, crops, and agricultural products, to educate them about the origins of their food and many other products they use in their daily lives. For many students, this event was their first introduction to agriculture and its importance to society. Principal presenters included Farm Bureau, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, members of local farmer's cooperatives, and NRCS.

Key Outcomes

Preston Evans, soil scientist in the Cookeville, Tennessee MLRA Soil Survey Office, assisted with the Farm Days held for the Wilson County school systems. Wilson County is a growing area near Nashville, Tennessee. Agriculture is not as predominant in this area as it once was. The key outcome from this TSS event was to provide an introduction of soils to nearly 1,000 students, many of whom live in urban or suburban areas where the importance of agriculture is not very evident. This introduction stressed the importance of soils in the production of food (livestock and food crops) and clothing (fiber products such as wool and cotton).

Preston's involvement in this event allowed him to work with other more experienced presenters and to observe effective delivery techniques. It also provided him an opportunity to develop part of the program and test its effectiveness on a young audience. Presenting soils information to this audience is a departure from the typical informational delivery to adults by MLRA soil survey office staff. Involvement in this event also provides opportunities to network with Federal, State, and local entities and presents a positive, professional image of NRCS.

