

Soil Science Division

Soil Survey Region 12

Tolland, Connecticut, Soil Survey Office

Assisting with the Natural Resources Conservation Academy

Purpose

On Soils Day, July 18, the Tolland Soil Survey Office staff participated in the 2018 Natural Resources Conservation Academy (NRCA) Conservation Ambassador Program at the University of Connecticut. This event is a week-long summer camp for high school students interested in the science of natural resources. The soils staff assisted Connecticut NRCS staff with three field stations: one station featured a drained hydric soils pit, another featured a moderately well drained soil formed in lodgment till on a classic drumlin landform, and a third station provided hands-on activities related to soil macrofauna and invasive earthworms.

Capping off the event was a demonstration of the rainfall simulator, which shows the relationship between rainfall intensity and soil erosion, soil erosion potential on different soil types, and methods by which soil erosion may be controlled. The simulator used trays of soils that participant groups had collected from areas differing in land cover.

Key Outcomes

Student participants were highly engaged and were quick to get their hands dirty trying out all of the demonstration field tools. The Macauley peat sampler was a huge hit—the students made a competition out of who could get the deepest sample from a nearby wet meadow. This is the fourth year the Tolland office has assisted with NRCA. Staff always find the teaching activity enjoyable, rewarding, and worthwhile. Exposure of high school students to soils and the activities of soil scientists helps to increase interest in this field of study, since the opportunity to attend college may be just around the corner for many participants.

