

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Soil and Plant Science Division

Soil Survey Region 5 Office



Region 5 Ecological Site Specialists Train USDA Employees and Youth

Purpose

In the past month, two Region 5 Ecological Site Specialists taught USDA employees and high school youth about soils, plant communities, ecological site descriptions (ESDs), and Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health (IIRH) reference sheets.

Chris Tecklenburg, Ecological Site Specialist in Hutchinson, KS, taught high school students from around the state about soils, ecological sites, and plant communities at the 2019 Society for Range Management Kansas Range Youth Camp June 18-21. Students were able to experience texturing soil samples, observe soil stability demonstrations, and discuss the impacts of plant communities on soil infiltration. Chris led the group of students across the landscape to see different types of soils and plants that persist on those soils.

David Kraft, Ecological Site Specialist for Regions 5 and 9, served as an instructor at the NRCS Employee Development Center's 2019 course *Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health*. Held June 10-14 in Las Cruces, NM, classroom sessions were conducted on the campus of New Mexico State University and field sessions at the nearby Jornada Range Research Unit. In total, 38 participants came from Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah.

Throughout the course, participants learn about 17 indicators on the landscape that provide a qualitative assessment of how rangelands are functioning within three attributes of rangeland: soil site stability, hydrologic function, and biotic integrity.

Participants are exposed to the different indicators and then conduct assessments of those indicators on three separate sites on the landscape, using IIRH Reference Sheets developed from ecological site descriptions.

Key Outcomes

Soils education supports conservation planning in that soils and knowledge of them are the basis for all conservation planning activities. A conservation plan should not be made without first looking at the soils.

NRCS people are committed to sharing our scientific and technical knowledge of the best conservation practices on soils, rangelands, farmlands, forests, and more with each other, students, and anyone else interested in learning about how to *help people help the land*.





Chris Tecklenburg, Ecological Site Specialist from Hutchinson, KS in Region 5, speaks to SRM Range Youth Camp Students about soils, ecological sites, and rangelands.



IIRH Cadre members lead a discussion on the assessment of the rangeland site using reference sheets developed from ecological site descriptions.