

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Soil and Plant Science Division—Region 9 Southern Great Plains Region

Forestry Awareness Week Illustrates Soils and Forest Industry Relationship

Purpose

For the past 30 years the Piney Woods Chapter of the Louisiana Society of American Foresters (LASAF) have coordinated the Forestry Awareness Program in Northern Louisiana, which presents to students and teachers the different aspects of the Science of Forestry. This program brings together Foresters, Biologists, Soil Scientists, Wildlife Agents, Water Quality Specialists, Forest Industry Equipment Specialists, and Private Forest Land Owners to share knowledge and expertise in their respective fields.

This year, the 2-day event was held at the North Toledo Bend State Park in Sabine Parish, Louisiana. There were approximately 450 students and teachers in attendance over the 2 days. Eight stations were set up to cover all aspects that the Forest Industry impacts, from seedling selection, soil management and interpretations, timber stand management and harvest selection, to final wood products, such as paper, tooth brushes, building material, and anything that is wood related. The students spent 20 minutes at each station, listening to speakers talk about their specialty in their respective fields and how they support the Forest Industry.

During the 20-minute Soils session, students were introduced to the basic components of soil, which are minerals, organic matter, water, and air; and how each component plays an important part in the building of "Soil". Interactive activities included soil monoliths used to point out soil colors, soil layers, and soil horizons; the Munsell Soil Color Book was used to identify soil colors and what colors indicate in the soil; the soil texture triangle was used to explain how Soil Scientists use percentages of sand, silt, and clay to determine soil texture. To demonstrate the differences in soils, sieves of various sizes containing pea-size gravel (clay particles), silt particles, and very fine sand grains were passed around for the children to learn how soil scientists feel the soil to determine texture.



Primary layers of a soil profile used to identify A, B and C horizons.



Texture Triangle used to identify soil texture.



Marc Bordelon, MSSO Project Leader, Ruston, Louisiana, Region 9, Soil and Plant Science Division (SSD) has had the opportunity to participate in this event several times, and this year was no exception. Marc enjoys bringing the world of "Soils" to young individuals and enlighten them to the fact how much our lives are connected to the soil. He explained that Soil is one of our most important natural resources along with Air and Water and described how these natural resources interconnect to create a healthy ecosystem to support all living things. Using the forest as an example, he explained how the soils support the growth and production of the forest.



Kevin Cox, soil conservation technician from the Mansfield, Louisiana Field Office, and Macey Canerday, district technician from the Natchitoches, Louisiana Field Office talked about using Web Soil Survey and other published soil survey books and maps to provide the scientific data needed to carry out their everyday responsibilities as conservationists, technicians, biologists, engineers, water quality specialists, and soil scientists.

Key Outcomes

Students and teachers, came away with a better perspective of how important "Soil" is and how it works in conjunction with air and water, to create a healthy ecosystem that provides for sustainable plants and crops, healthy livestock and wildlife populations, clean waterways, and clean air. They also learned the Soil Scientists version of the difference between "Dirt" and "Soil"... that "dirt" is what you have stuck to the bottom of your shoes and track it into your homes, and that "Soil" is a three-dimensional medium that supports life, not only humans but all plants, animals, and the billions of bacteria, fungi, and microorganisms that can be found in every thimble full.



Soil components used to feel texture.

Future Goals

The Soil and Plant Science Division (SPSD) is committed to providing the best possible soils information for land use and management. Participating in activities that bring other agencies together will ensure soils data is used when making determinations regarding land management practices. Continuing to educate students and teachers on soil processes ensures future generations will benefit from healthy, sustainable, and productive soils.