

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Soil and Plant Science Division

Soil Survey Region 2 Office, Davis, California



Arcata, California, MLRA Soil Survey Office

Region 6 Collegiate Soil Judging Competition

Purpose

On a crisp Saturday morning in the Bald Hills of Humboldt County, staff from the Arcata and Hanford MLRA Soil Survey Offices assisted in the Region 6 Collegiate Soil Judging competition hosted by Humboldt State University's program in Rangeland Resources & Wildland Soils. Soil Judging Teams from CSU–Fresno, CSU–Chico, Humboldt State University, Cal Poly–San Luis Obispo, and New Mexico State University competed. The students described three soil pits individually and one soil pit as a team.

Awards were given for the top five individual pit scores and for the best team pit description. The overall top three teams advance to nationals in Columbus, Ohio, in April 2020.

To successfully describe a soil pit, contestants must fill out their score-cards with the correct site characteristics; physical characteristics of each identified soil horizon, including soil texture, color, and structure; soil taxonomy; and selected site interpretations of the soil.



*Chico State team at site #2
in beautiful Humboldt
County.*



*Cal Poly–San Luis Obispo team won individual
awards, group judging, and overall team award.*

Sue Aszman, NRCS MLRA leader, and Ann Tan, soil scientist, from the Arcata office, and Phil Smith, NRCS MLRA leader from the Hanford office, assisted Joe Seney and Dr. Susan Marshall in describing the pits and grading the scorecards.

Key Outcomes

In the end, Cal Poly was triumphant, placing first in the overall competition as well as the team pit competition. Individuals Blake Toney, Kaitlyn Valverde, Katie White, Janelle Rey, and Lillian Graham placed 1st through 5th, respectively. The overall top 3 teams (Cal Poly–San Luis Obispo, Humboldt State University, and New Mexico State University) advance to nationals in Columbus, Ohio, 2020.



Future Goals/Conclusions

The competition had a great turnout! Humboldt State University's Joe Seney and Dr. Susan Marshall ran a very well-organized competition. All the participants worked hard describing four very different soil pits. It was great that newcomer New Mexico State University was able to secure a spot in the National Competition, and all the participants were very supportive of one another.

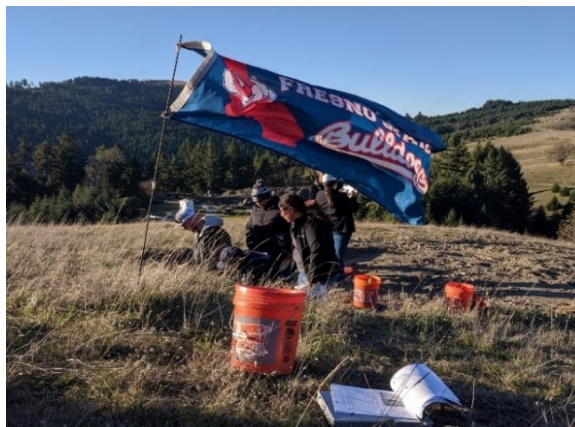
Thanks to Green Diamond Resources (GDR) for allowing access and excavating soils pits. SHN Consulting Engineers and Geologists, Natural Resources Management Corporation (NRM), and the Professional Soil Scientists Association of California (PSSAC) also sponsored the competition. Hopefully, more teams will join in the future as soil judging in the west continues to grow in popularity!



2nd place team Humboldt State University (left) and 3rd place team New Mexico State University (right). Also pictured: Joe Seney, Ann Tan, Phil Smith, and Dr. Susan Marshall.



Joe Seney, Humboldt State University; Ann Tan and Sue Aszman, NRCS Arcata; and Phil Smith, NRCS Hanford.



Fresno team in action describing bonus pit.