

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Soil and Plant Science Division

Soil Survey Region 5

March 2020



Salina, Kansas, Soil Survey Office

Conservation Day at the Capitol

Purpose

Soil scientists Brian Nester, from the Salina Soil Survey Office, and Matalyn Stark, from the Manhattan Area Office, attended Conservation Day at the Kansas State Capitol in Topeka. Also attending were other representatives from NRCS, county conservation districts, and the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts. Representatives from these groups demonstrated an augmented reality sandbox, tabletop rainfall simulators, and a non-inflatable soil tunnel. They also showcased what we do as a conservation service. Spectators included legislators, visitors from the public, and local school groups.



Presenters from NRCS, county conservation districts, and the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts.

The new, non-inflatable soil tunnel is an excellent teaching tool for indoor venues, such as the Conservation Day at the Capitol, soil health conferences, and kid's days. The non-inflatable soil tunnel provides all the same great information about soils and soil health as the inflatable soil tunnel, but without the loud blower that makes it relatively unusable in most indoor situations.





Visitors to the Capitol making their way around and through the soil tunnel.

Brian Nester and Matalyn Stark presented the non-inflatable soil tunnel during this self-paced event. They fielded questions from legislators and public visitors and talked briefly about the importance of soils and soil health as visitors made their way around and through the soil tunnel. Legislators and conservation district managers showed an immense interest in the non-inflatable soil tunnel for use in educating the public about the importance and nature of soils



Matalyn Stark (NRCS) talking to legislators about the importance of soils and soil health.

Key Outcomes

This opportunity brought soil knowledge, soil health, and soil conservation to the front of the conversation with legislators and the public. Building relationships and sharing knowledge can lead to more science-based and conservation-based decisions by legislators and landowners as we continue *helping people help the land*.

