

SOIL AND PLANT SCIENCE DIVISION

Technical Soil Services

South Central Region



Nacogdoches and Bryan, Texas, Major Land Resource Area Soil Survey Offices

Sam Houston State University Area Land Judging Contest

Purpose

The Nacogdoches and Bryan, Texas, Soil Survey Offices staff partnered with Texas Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Soil Health Specialist Dennis Brezina to set up a land judging contest on April 10, 2023, at Sam Houston State University (SHSU) in Huntsville, Texas (see figure 1). Each year, SHSU hosts the Land and Homesite Judging area contests where student teams strive for high scores to qualify and advance to the state level contest.

Background

Named after Sam Houston, who was a prominent member of Texas history, SHSU is the third-oldest public college in Texas and has an enrollment of approximately 20,000 students. Dr. Doug Ullrich, chair, and professor at the university's Agricultural Sciences department, worked with NRCS staff onsite at the Gibbs Ranch, where the contest was held.

Key Outcomes

Gibbs Ranch, which encompasses 1,800 acres, is a university-owned tract of land where college students attend field laboratory sessions and research courses in animal science, soil fertility, wildlife ecology, and pasture management. The large acreage provided for a diversity of site conditions for the land judging contest. Site conditions included high water tables and saturated soils, deep sandy topsoil over clayey subsurface horizons with high shrink-swell (Vertic properties) conditions (see figure 2).



Figure 1. Tyson Hart (MLRA Soil Survey Leader) measuring slope on a contest site.



Figure 2. A soil profile from the soil pit at one of the contest sites.