

Perry County Conservation District
hosts annual Land Judging Competition
at the Martz Farm
on November 9, 2021

Each year, students from all four school districts in the county gather to compete in the annual Land Judging Competition. This event is in partnership with the District and a local farmer who agrees to host the group for the day. As tradition would have it, the weather is usually cold and rainy, but the sun decided to shine and it was a beautiful day to be outside.

This year, Ken and Sandy Martz of Duncannon agreed to host and share their farmland for this educational event.

The focus of the contest is to introduce students in grades 9 through 12 to soil evaluation and its relationship to land use and soil and water quality. Students received a training at the 'demo pit' by NRCS agents Kevin Morgan and Samantha DiLorenzo, then the students individually evaluate the soil in two different test pits to determine what would be the best land use for that particular area.

The pits are about 3 1/2 feet deep and large enough for students to walk down into to complete their evaluations. Students determine the slope, internal drainage, surface stoniness, soil texture (surface and subsurface), and the depth to bedrock. Based on these evaluations, participants then determine the soil's capability class and select the best land use for that particular soil.

The goal is to select the most productive use of the land that would maintain or improve soil and water quality in a sustainable way. Participants then select best management practices for that particular land use and land capability class.

For more information on how to get involved with District programs like these, please contact Kristie Smith, Watershed Specialist by phone at #717-582-5138 or by email ksmith@perryco.org.

Photos taken during the event can be found Perry County Conservation District (New Bloomfield, PA) Facebook page.



The Demo Pit - Kevin Morgan and Samantha DiLorenzo, of the Perry County NRCS field office, welcome the students by sharing some interesting details about their jobs and explain how soil management is a key component to a successful farming operation (Photo by Larry Gildner).



The Art of No-Till - Students from Greenwood, West Perry, Newport, and Susquenita are shown how a no-till drill sows in the seeds with minimal soil disturbance and discussed the importance of this for soil health at the Farm Talk station led by Ken Martz. (Photo by Larry Gildner).



The Steel Trowel Trophy Goes To... - (L to R) Kristie Smith - PCCD, Samantha DiLorenzo - NRCS, Sarah Keller of Senator DiSanto's office, 1st Place Winner Andrea Clark, 2nd Place Winner Emily Clark, 3rd Place Winner Leroy Brofee all of Greenwood High School. (Back row) Ken Martz - Farm Owner, Larry Gildner - District Board Member, and Commissioner Gary Eby.