Fayette County demonstrates new mobile soil health system

By Jeff Woodward, area resource soil scientist, Jackson Area Office

The inaugural voyage of the new Area 1 mobile soil health demonstration system took place on October 27 in Fayette County. This was a great event for educating the youth of Fayette County on the importance of soil conservation, soil health and cover crops. Around 380 children and 45 teachers got to experience the rainfall simulator and the effects of different farming practices can have on the soil and how keeping a living root on the soil and adopting no-till with cover crops as a farming system prevented runoff, erosion, and increased rainfall infiltration into the soil. This was combined with education on the ecosystem, and how good soil health helps restore a robust environment for soil microbes to live. And to top it off they got to see how non-point source pollution can cause a domino effect of water degradation as each small source of pollution adds up to cause a lot of problems downstream.

The kids really were surprised when they did the countdown from three to one and shouted rain and the rainfall simulator sprung to life via remote control. So many surprised giggles as they got to see the rain falling on the soil pans. They quickly saw how the plowed soil began running off with lots of muddy water and they when I asked them which water they would rather play or swim in on the runoff containers they agreed that they didn't want to swim in that muddy water. Therefore, we do this it creates such an AH-HA moment for them, and they really understood what they should be adopted. I had one child say that their dad used cover crops on their farm, and this was very joyful to hear that a young student would know about cover crops.

The mobile soil health demonstration system will be a great tool to educate the public about why we need soil health as well as showing area farmers what they can be doing on their farms. In addition to the rainfall simulator, we can demonstrate slake/slump samples, show videos on soil conservation, and soon will have a microscope digital camera to show real life soil microbes on their soil samples. With so many possibilities this tool will be so valuable for West Tennessee and it just the first foundation block for furthering soil health throughout the area. Any way we can help the people help the land will be a win for soil conservation."


FARMFEST
2022