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MEDIA ADVISORY

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Cal Poly Hosts National Collegiate Soil Judging Contest March 23-24

WHAT: Cal Poly's Earth and Soil Sciences Department is hosting the National Collegiate Soil Judging Contest March 23 and 24. This is a professional-caliber, undergraduate contest in which students describe, classify and interpret soils and landscapes. The event offers excellent video and photo feature opportunities, with students in earth pits and amid earth piles judging soil layers.

Before the contest, there are four days of practice, where teams will use "practice pits" to get to know the local soils and the rationale behind how professional judges have described, classified and interpreted the soils.

Practice and contest soils are pre-judged by two professional soil scientists from the National Resources Conservation Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

WHEN:

The contest has two events - individual judging on Thursday, March 23; and group judging on Friday, March 24. The March 23 competition is from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. The March 24 competition is from 7:30 a.m. to 2:40 p.m.

WHERE:

Practice and contest soils will be on the Cal Poly campus, and on the Halter Ranch, 8910 Adelaida Road, Paso Robles. Access to the ranch and soils has been provided by Ranch Manager Mitch Wyss. Access to the Cal Poly soils has been provided by Gary Ketcham, administrator of farm operations at Cal Poly.

WHO:

Some 21 collegiate teams from the United States are participating. There are seven collegiate soil judging regions in the United States. Teams compete in their region, and the top teams qualify for the national contest. Cal Poly's soil judging team placed second in its regional competition, but as the hosting university, is not allowed to compete.

Competing are:

- o University of Arizona
- o Auburn University
- o West Virginia University
- o Virginia Tech
- o South Dakota State University
- o Kansas State University
- o University of Missouri
- o University of Georgia
- o University of Illinois
- o University of Maryland
- o New Mexico State University
- o Texas A & M University
- o The Ohio State University
- o University of Idaho
- o Purdue University
- o University of Wisconsin Platteville
- o University of Kentucky

- Utah State University
- Texas Tech University
- University of Rhode Island
- Tarleton State University

WHY:

It is Cal Poly's turn. The national contest rotates through the seven regions, so each region hosts it about every seven years. The University of Arizona hosted the national contest in 1999. Cal Poly last hosted the national contest in 1984.

Why do students participate in soil judging

- It prepares them for a professional career in soil science and gives them additional experience. Soil judges are much sought after by universities offering graduate degrees and by prospective employers including government agencies at all levels, and agricultural and environmental consulting companies. Careers include soil survey, all types of resource management, agricultural production, agricultural consulting, environmental consulting, research, and teaching.

SPONSORS: In addition to the Cal Poly College of Agriculture, the event is co-sponsored by

- The Soil Science Society of America
- The American Society of Agronomy
- Halter Ranch Vineyard, Paso Robles, California (providing about one-third of the practice soils)
- The Natural Resources Conservation Service, an agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (providing judges)

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