

Maryland Wins Regional Contest Both UMD and U Del Heading to Ohio for Nationals

The University of Maryland Soil Judging Team took first place at the 2019 Northeast Regional Soil Judging contest. The team swept the medal stand with Cathy Wang in 1st, Jonathan Moy in 2nd, and Yunxuan Pei in 3rd. This impressive victory adds to the team's recent run of success with three national championships in the past seven years (over the 60 year history of the event, UMD has had 5 National Championships and 25 Regional Contest Victories). The team had two other finishers in the top 15: Antonio Vega in 10th and Mia Godbey in 11th. Also on the team were Isabella Bruno, Mary Gumerov, Jacob Mast, Rory Skirzenski, Jeniffer Statter, and Wade Williams. The team was coached by Dr. Brian Needelman and Barret Wessel from the Department of Environmental Science and Technology.

Brand new to the competition this year was a team from the Univ. of Delaware, coached by MAPSS members Jenwei Tsai and Jocelyn Wardrup (Grad Student at U. Del.) The members of the Delaware team were Katie Mina, Luke Mulcahy, Christopher Swift, Morgan "Duke" Williams. These new kids on the block had a fantastic showing with Katie Mina finishing in 15th place, the team finishing in 5th place in the group judging which landed them a 5th place showing overall, and the opportunity to participate in the National Soil Judging Contest next Spring that will be hosted by Ohio State University. (Way to go Blue Hens!)

This year a total of 10 universities participated in the contest (the largest number ever), which included 3 newcomers. In addition to the Univ. of Delaware, for the first time ever, one coach and eight students from the Univ. of Pittsburgh (Johnstown) joined with one coach and two students from SUNY Fredonia to field the "Pitt" team. Also for the first time, the University of Vermont was among the crowd gathered for the NE Regional contest (coached by former UMD soil judge (2000-2002) Ben Waterman.)

Schools that have also become regulars at the NE regional contest include Stockton Univ. (NJ) which began participation in 2013, Bloomsburg Univ. (currently coached by former UMD soil judge (2003-2006) Rebecca Bourgault) which joined the NE regional ranks in 2015, and Brooklyn College which participated both last year (2018) and this year.

This year the contest was hosted by the University of Maryland, led by Dr. Martin Rabenhorst and grad student Evan Park from the Department of Environmental Science and Technology, who were strongly supported by our USDA-NRCS Colleagues (especially Phil King, Jim Brewer and Annie Rossi). A great many other MAPSS members stepped up to help with the contest (Thank you, thank you, thank you!) Dr. Rabenhorst kept contest information Top Secret so that UMD students and coaches didn't have insider information. The contestants examined practice sites October 9-10 across Queen Annes (Wye Island and Wye REC), Caroline (Phil Snow's Farm) and Kent counties (Thank you Tommy Wilbanks) which included mostly Ultisols, Alfisols and Entisols derived from Tertiary sediments and Late Pleistocene aeolian deposits. The contest itself was held on October 11 at Remington Farms near Chestertown, Maryland.

Among a field of 16 teams from 10 Universities, and behind Maryland in 1st place, the Univ. of Rhode Island finished 2nd, Delaware Valley Univ. 3rd, Penn State Univ. 4th and first time participant Univ. of Delaware placed 5th. These five will be representing the NE region at the National contest in Ohio next Spring.



Winning University of Maryland Soil Judging Team with Coaches Brian Needelman and Barret Wessel and contest organizer Martin Rabenhorst.



Fifth place University of Delaware Soil Judging Team with Coaches Jenwei Tsai and Jocelyn Wardrup and contest organizer Martin Rabenhorst.