

## CHECKLIST AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR JUDGES FOR HOLDING LAND JUDGING AND HOMESITE CONTESTS IN WEST VIRGINIA

### Months in Advance of Contest

1. **Site.** Select a site with:

a) suitable **variation** in soil types and landforms. This includes variations in slope and landscape, permeability, erosion, and low areas with potential drainage problems.



b) **shelter** (a barn or garage), where scoring can be done. In the scoring area, tables need to be available like picnic tables or portable tables. Alternatively, platforms can be made from boards on hay bales, on hay wagons, etc. Also, lawn chairs, buckets, or other suitable objects for sitting should be provided. Electricity may be needed if the computer Excel file is used to record the scores.



c) enough **parking** space. Some teams now can only travel to contests in buses!



d) and get **Landowners approval!**

2. **Contest Date.** Make sure Conservation Districts, 4-H teams, and FFA Region teams know the date of the contest. Sometimes it is not a good idea to tell where the contest is being held, but simply let the team coaches know where and what time to meet to go to the contest site.

3. **Cards.** Order enough Land Judging and Homesite cards or scoresheets from WVU for the contest. Order cards from [jskousen@wvu.edu](mailto:jskousen@wvu.edu) - 304-293-2667.

### **Day or Two Before the Contest**

1. Four holes are dug by hand or with a backhoe and judged according to the instructions and guidelines in the Land Judging Book and Homesite Evaluation Book. Set slope stakes and field boundaries as directed. I use wooden surveyor stakes (45") for slope stakes, and wire flagging for field boundaries.





2. Land judging and homesite evaluation field signs must be made up. Field signs must be clearly written, provide needed information, and not be misleading, vague, or give extraneous information. Land Judging field signs contain the following information:

- a) Field number,
- b) Original topsoil depth,
- c) Depth to mottles,
- d) Size of the field in acres,
- e) Soil pH,
- f) Amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium in pounds/ac,
- g) Other factors or given information necessary to judge the hole.



Homesite field signs contain the following information:

- a) Field number,
- b) Depth of hole (can be given in inches or measure based on hole depth)
- c) Original topsoil depth,
- d) Water table depth in inches,
- e) Other factors or given information necessary to judge the homesite.

3. Make up at least two sets of Keys or Master Scorecards: one for yourself when you take the students back through the holes, and another set for those who are scoring the cards. If the carbon Land Judging scoresheet is used, make enough copies for each of the coaches to score their student's forms.

4. Secure enough Tabulation Sheets, one for each team. The form can be found on the web site, or make sure that the Excel Program with suitable computer/printer capabilities is available.

## Morning of the Contest

1. Before leaving the meeting site (normally people meet at high school parking lots, Conservation District Offices, or at NRCS buildings, etc.), remind kids to go to the bathroom. Do not give Tabulation Sheets, score cards or scoresheets to the participants or coaches before you get to the contest site.
2. At the contest site, have each coach fill out the Tabulation Sheet by listing their contestants twice on the sheet (once for land judging and once for homesite). Each contestant should have his name, contestant number and team letter. For example, if Jefferson High School is team E, and Jennifer Logins is contestant 3, she is E-3. If computer spreadsheets are being used to tabulate, enter the information on the computer.
3. At the site, pass out scorecards or scoresheets (land judging and homesite) to the contestants. Have them fill out each card with their name, contestant number, and team.
4. Select group leaders that will travel with the groups to each hole (or alternatively, a group leader may be assigned to stay at an individual hole).
5. Gather people to help score cards.

## Instructions to Coaches and Contestants before Contest

1. **Welcome** to the contest. Introduce special guests and landowner, express thanks to the landowner, and add any comments about the farm, history (brief please), etc. Also, please introduce past national winners which may be present.
2. **Four pits** will be judged for Land Judging and Homesite. Judge both land judging and homesite at the same time. **About 30 minutes** (can be adjusted based on the number of contestants at each hole) will be given at each hole to score both cards. Group leaders are to make sure contestants **move in and out** of the hole without taking too long. Water bottles will be provided at each hole to help judge surface texture and permeability. Prick a hole in the cap so water can be squirted out.



3. **Slope stakes** are wooden surveyor stakes driven in at the same height at each hole.
4. **Field boundaries** are marked by red wire flags. You should walk these boundaries.
5. **Field signs** are critical and contain important information. Please read them carefully.
6. On one hole, have the contestants **estimate the slope percent** and write on the Homesite card.
7. If a pit is flagged or marked, please judge the soil profile between the flags.
8. **Check the scorecards** again and make sure your name, contestant number and team are listed on each one.
9. Contestants should have pencils, clipboard, score cards and scoresheet, knife, perhaps a rag for mud. Be careful with knives. Watch out for ticks, poison ivy, etc.
10. **No cell phones**, iPods, communication devices, etc.
11. **Do your own work.** If group leader suspects or sees you talking or looking at someone else's scorecard, your card will be taken and a zero given, or you will be disqualified.
12. When done with the cards for each hole, hand them to the group leader and someone will pick them up and take them to the scorers.
13. Show trophies, plaques, or give any other incentive to do well in the contest.



### **Scoring and Tabulation**

1. Scorers will carefully grade each card and tally individual and team scores on the Tabulation Score Sheets. Calculators are very useful. If computers are available, use the Excel Spreadsheet.
2. Drop the lowest individual score from each team, so that there are three scores to a team. (If only three contestants for a team, do not drop a contestant). Determine the team scores from the top three individuals on a team and order them into placings.



3. Order the top ten or five individuals (depending on size of the contest).
4. While scoring is being finalized, the Soil Scientist or Official Contest Judge can take the contestants back through the holes and show the reasons for judging and answer questions.



### Awards

1. Announce results of Homesite Evaluation Contest first.
  - a) Present individuals first, starting with 10<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> place, giving teams, scores, and then names.
  - b) Present top 3 or 4 teams (depending on number of teams) giving 4<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> with scores.
2. Announce results of Land Judging second.
  - a) Present individuals first, starting with 10<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> place, giving teams, scores, and then names.
  - b) Present top 3 or 4 teams (depending on number of teams) giving 4<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> with scores.
3. Present plaques, trophies or ribbons as announcements are made.

Thanks to everyone, compliments, etc. Pick up area for trash, etc.





### **Tools and Supplies Needed**

1. Soil Profile Judging Tools: knife, measuring tapes (50-ft tape for slope stakes, and 10-ft tape for hole depth and erosion measurements), hammer, shovels, sharpshooters, clinometers or Abney levels.
2. Calculators, scorecards, signs, extra paper or cardboard for field signs, pencils, slope stakes, wire flagging.