

MASSACHUSETTS ENVIROTHON

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2010 FACT SHEET

The Mass Envirothon Challenge

The Massachusetts Envirothon is a statewide environmental education program that challenges teams of high school students to:

- ❖ Get outdoors and explore -- and gain hands-on knowledge and experience of Massachusetts ecosystems
- ❖ Engage with their communities -- and develop skills for investigating local environmental issues and participating in community decisions and action
- ❖ Test their environmental knowledge and skills in a challenging competition
- ❖ Grow in their commitment to stewardship of the environment and natural resources
- ❖ Cultivate a curiosity and love of learning in science
- ❖ Increase their awareness of career opportunities in the environmental field

The Massachusetts Envirothon is a network of environmental scientists, educators, managers, and activists committed to preparing the next generation of knowledgeable and concerned environmental citizens and professionals. Evaluation reports from recent years are available.

Resources

The Massachusetts Envirothon offers curriculum materials for learning about ecology, conservation, and natural resource management. The *Team Resource Manual* includes background on forest, wildlife, soil, and water resources.

Each year Envirothon teams also investigate and report on a key “Current Issue” as it occurs in their own community. Past Current Issues have included Wetland Conservation, Stormwater Management, Strengthening Local Food Systems, Outdoor Recreation, Climate Protection, Energy Conservation & Renewable Energy, and Open Space Planning. Current Issue materials developed each year include *Questions and Resources for Teams* and *Strategies for Community Research*. Resources are developed to be relevant to all Massachusetts communities - rural, urban, suburban. Mass Envirothon also provides each team with a custom map of the team’s community depicting key features related to the Current Issue.

Networking and professional development for coaches is a major focus of the Mass Envirothon program.

The Envirothon year begins with a series of fall and winter workshops that orient coaches and teams and provide background and opportunities for skill practice. A November workshop on the campus of UMass Amherst has become the year’s second largest event.

The Envirothon Event

The Envirothon year culminates in the spring with a major event that draws all teams together from across the state. The event is held (rain or shine) at an inspiring outdoor site, usually a state park or forest.

Through the morning, teams visit four ecostations where they test their knowledge of forests, wildlife, soil, and water resources. They also make a 15 minute presentation about how the year’s “current issue” relates to their community, then answer questions from a panel of judges about their recommendations. Coaches have opportunities to network, observe, and attend presentations.

At lunchtime, teams are invited to share their community research experiences at an informal roundtable session. The day also includes awards and recognition, and a community service project at the event site.

Participation

Teams of five students (and one or two alternates) represent their school or community organization at the Envirothon. More students are often involved back at the school. Teams usually have one or two coaches.

In an typical year, more than 50 teams involving more than 600 young people engage in Envirothon activities across Massachusetts. Teams represent a diverse array of urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Awards and Recognition

Scores from ecostation tests and the current issue presentation are combined to determine an overall winner. The winning team is entitled to compete in the Canon (North American) Envirothon. Prizes are awarded for the first, second, and third place winners and the top scoring teams at each ecostation.

A \$1,000 scholarship to the University of Massachusetts' College of Natural Sciences is awarded each year to one senior applicant who has participated in the Envirothon program.

The noncompetitive Community Awards -- for Community Research and for Community Action -- recognize teams who achieve high standards in their community research and who take what they have learned and apply it in service to their communities.

Sponsors

The Massachusetts Envirothon is planned each year by the Massachusetts Envirothon Committee, a subcommittee of the interagency Massachusetts State Commission for Soil, Water, and Related Resources including agency staff and volunteers.

Sponsors (providing staff time or funding or both in recent years) include the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts (and individual Conservation Districts), University of Massachusetts Extension, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Mass Department of Conservation & Recreation, MassWildlife, MassGIS, Mass Department of Environmental Protection, the U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Forest Service, the Environmental Business Council, the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, and the Massachusetts Environmental Trust.

The 2010 Mass Envirothon

When: Thursday, May 13
Where: Otter River State Forest (Baldwinville)
Current Issue: Groundwater Protection

For more information on the 2010 Mass Envirothon, including winter workshop dates, team registration procedures, and opportunities to volunteer, visit: <http://www.maenvirothon.org>

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