

## 2004 Massachusetts Envirothon Current Issue Problem

# Natural Resource Management in the Urban Environment

### Introduction

In order to respond to this problem, your team will need to do some investigation. You will need to talk to a variety of people in your community and in other communities, study print and web based resources, and make observations in the field.

If you do a thorough job in your investigations, you will not only score well but you can qualify for Mass Envirothon's Community Research Award. And if you take what you learn and apply it in service to your community, you can qualify for Mass Envirothon's Community Service Award. See <http://maenvirothon.org/website-html/communityawards.html>.

Earlier this year your team received eleven pages of "Questions and Resources for Team Preparation" (<http://maenvirothon.org/website-html/currentissue2004.pdf>). If you have further questions on how to prepare your presentation, contact Will Snyder (413/545-3876 or [wsnyder@umassk12.net](mailto:wsnyder@umassk12.net)).

### The Problem

The long term direction that development takes in Massachusetts towns and cities is the result of many small decisions by planning board, conservation commission, board of health, and town meeting on the basis of individual, narrow interpretations of the law. It is only rarely that a community as a whole wakes up and thinks together about choices for the future.

Your team's investigation of urban natural resource issues in your community has not gone unnoticed. Your questions to local officials and residents about "How urban is our community?" and "How will our community develop in the future?" have raised some concerns - people are wondering what kinds of change may be in store in the long run. Your team has been invited to make a 15 minute presentation to your city council or town meeting about your findings.

You see this presentation as a chance to provide a big picture perspective that may help your community and its leaders think about directions for development for the long term. At the same time, you realize that you have to make the issues real and immediate for people - and you see this as an opportunity to raise awareness on a particularly pressing urban issue facing your community today. You want to recommend a specific step that your community should take, including who should be involved. And keeping in mind that people are skeptical of new initiatives in the midst of local, state, and national budget cuts, you know that whatever step you recommend will have to be clear and specific and practical and do-able.

### Some Tips for Your Presentation

Use maps of different scales to introduce your panel of judges to your community and to the urban nature of your community. In this problem, your "community" may extend well beyond your municipality.

The idea that communities are interconnected and especially that all communities are in some ways "urban" is new to many people. Be sure to spend some time introducing these ideas in ways that your audience will understand. Use examples, stories, maps, and/or other visual aids

to convey your meaning.

Show the judges *how* you know what you know. Tell them who you talked to, where you visited, what your information sources were and how you evaluated them.

You will have 15 minutes for your presentation, followed by a 10 minute question period.

## **In Your Presentation, You Should:**

### **Introduce your community**

In what ways is your community urban? How urban are you compared with other communities? How is your community connected to other communities, in your region and beyond?

Introduce the geography and natural resources of your area - water, forests, open land, soils, wildlife, energy sources, ecosystem services, etc. What elements of "green infrastructure" do you rely on, near and far?

Introduce your community's "gray" infrastructure (provision of power and heat, transportation, shelter, water supply and treatment, waste disposal, etc.) and how it relates to the underlying ecosystem? What patterns of change can you expect in the 10 to 20 years?

### **Focus on the specific issue you have identified**

Introduce the "urban" issue, that, from your investigations, seems most pressing and in need of action by your community. Make your case that this is a critical issue to be addressed! Provide background on how the issue manifests itself in your community, and what the community is already doing to address the issue. Show how the larger perspective you have been viewing it from can make a difference in thinking about solutions.

### **Introduce the next step you are recommending to your community.**

Describe specific actions to be taken and who will be involved in implementing them. Describe the outcomes you expect will result.

Note how your proposal will affect your community's "green infrastructure" and the natural resources and ecosystem services it provides (e.g. forests, wildlife, soils, water).

Include general information about what you expect the costs will be and who will bear them. Note how your proposal will affect local people and the economy. Will there be winners and losers?