



UPDATES

Pennsylvania Envirothon Inc.

Fall 2013

York Home School Association represents Pennsylvania at North American Envirothon

A five-member team of students from the York Home School Association located in York County earned the honor to represent Pennsylvania at the 2013 North American Envirothon competition after winning Pennsylvania's state competition.

On Saturday, August 3rd, the team started their journey to the North American Envirothon by boarding a flight from Harrisburg to Bozeman (at least that is what they had hoped). Upon arriving in Denver for a connecting flight to Bozeman, the team, along with the team from Alabama and many others, was told the flight was cancelled because of severe weather, and no other flights were available until Sunday (maybe). Anxiously wanting to arrive at the competition prior to opening ceremony, which was scheduled for Sunday evening, the team's advisors rented a van and drove 10 hours to arrive at Montana State University Sunday afternoon around 4:00PM .

Once in Montana, the team immersed themselves in the entire North American Envirothon experience – training, testing, preparing, and delivering their oral presentation, making new friends, and enjoying a day at Yellowstone National Park. The team respectively placed 9th out of 57 teams that represented 47 states, nine Canadian provinces and one Canadian territory. Each team member received a Canon U.S.A. scholarship in the amount of \$1,100.

To not break tradition with travel glitches on their return to Pennsylvania, the team once again became stranded and was told it could not get from the Newark airport to the Harrisburg airport until Monday! With a little persuasion (or demand), the team and several other passengers were bused to their final destination. Whew, what a memorable adventure for this team.

Kudos goes to the team and advisors: Michael Renga, Collin Inners, Morgan Staub, Jessica Picone, Mariah Henry, Sheri Picone, Jill Oles, and Paul Oles (chaperone and driver)!



2013 North American Envirothon Results

The Mount Academy in Esopus, New York won the 2013 North American Envirothon. Sponsored by Canon U.S.A. and local conservation districts, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and the National Association of Conservation Districts, the Envirothon is North America's largest high school natural resource education competition. This year's competition was held at Montana State University from August 4–9, where 57 teams competed for a share of \$175,000 in scholarships, host grants, and Canon products.

The North American Envirothon tests teams on their knowledge of soils and land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife, and a current environmental issue. Each team's knowledge is tested under the supervision of foresters, soil scientists, wildlife specialists, and other natural resource professionals. Teamwork, problem-solving, and presentation skills are evaluated as each team offers a panel of judges an oral presentation with recommendations for solving a specific challenge that is presented during the competition. The current environmental issue for this year's competition was "sustainable rangeland management: achieving a balance between traditional agricultural uses with non-agricultural uses on Montana rangelands."

For more information and photos, visit the North American Envirothon website—www.envirothon.org.

Thank you, Canon U.S.A. and the Montana hosts for a wonderful event!

2014 Current Environmental Issue — “Sustainable Local Agriculture / Locally Grown”

In recent years a strong movement has emerged to redefine agriculture from the perspective of its sustainability (ability to be productively replicated in future generations) and its interconnection with its immediate environment. The movement has brought focus not only to these connections but to the profitability of small farms, the practicality of individuals growing their own food, and the environmental and economic benefits of obtaining food that has been produced locally.

According to the 1990 U.S. Farm Bill, sustainable agriculture should hold to these basic tenets:

- Satisfy human food and fiber needs and farmers’ and ranchers’ profit over the long term;
- Enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agricultural economy depends;
- Make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate natural biological cycles and controls;
- Sustain the economic viability of farm operations; and
- Enhance the quality of life for farmers, ranchers, and society as a whole.



Although the farm has long been a place where much thought has been given to stewardship of the earth, it has also been a battleground of principles where large scale economies often fight for position in front of solid conservation practices. While food and fiber production has soared due to new technologies, mechanization, increased chemical use, specialization, and government policies that favored maximizing production, there have been significant environmental and social costs. Prominent among these are topsoil depletion, groundwater contamination, decline of family farms, increasing production costs, intensified use of fossil fuel sources, and degradation of economic and social conditions in rural communities. The growing sustainable agriculture movement of the last two decades has focused on methodologies that address these concerns without damaging the economic viability of the farm.



According to the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program at U. Cal-Davis, basic operational core practices of the movement should include:

- Selection of species and varieties that are well suited to the site and to conditions on the farm;
- Diversification of crops (including livestock) and cultural practices to enhanced the biological and economic stability of the farm;
- Management of the soil to enhance and protect soil quality;
- Efficient and humane use in inputs; and
- Consideration of farmers’ goals and lifestyle choices.

Examples of specific practices that fit within this framework include but are definitely not limited to: recycling/composting yard and kitchen waste, polycultural farming, square foot gardening, seed saving/use of heirloom varieties, rainwater management practices (rain barrels, cisterns, rain gardens, etc.), vertical gardening, animal husbandry practices (small paddock rotational grazing, backyard chickens, Serengeti rotational grazing, etc.), integrated pest management, and best practices from organic agriculture. The way that crops are sold must also be accounted for in relation to sustainability. Food sold locally saves transportation energy (including consumers), whereas food that is sold at a remote location involves a different and higher set of energy costs for materials, labor, and transport.

Sustainability rests on the principle that we must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. While this can possibly be done with large scale operations, the focus of this topic will address smaller scale, family farm level operations.



PA Envirothon Remembers Donna Hays, a Colleague and Friend

by Lorelle Steach



“Good Morning, Sunshine,” I would say.

“Well Good Morning, Sweet Pea,” Donna would reply.

This was a telephone greeting that Donna and I shared often (especially two weeks prior to the PA State Envirothon), and it was one that always brought a smile and brightened the day no matter what the situation.

On July 12th, 2013 Donna Hays took the hand of God and followed the path that freed her from a brief battle with cancer.

Many of you knew Donna as the person who answered all of your questions and walked you through the registration process when attending the State Envirothon. Donna was a member of the Pennsylvania State Envirothon for more than 20 years. She had great compassion for young people and enjoyed sharing her love of nature and conservation. She demonstrated this by organizing the Franklin County Envirothon and working with many conservation-minded groups, such as 4-H, FFA, Watershed Associations, and Young Farmers. She was the joy-filled participant who sat next to you at an environmental education workshop. She was the friend who was always there when you needed a hand and a listening ear.

God blessed her with an infectious laugh (or giggle) and a great sense of humor that will be remembered by everyone who met her. She lived life to its fullest, and made a lasting impression on all the lives she touched.

In memory of Donna, the PA Envirothon Board of Directors will commemorate the high score Current Issue Station award as the Donna Hays Award. Donations made in memory of Donna will be used towards this award.

Donna Hays will be greatly missed by her Envirothon family and friends. “See you soon, Sunshine.”

PENNSYLVANIA ENVIROTHON

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2014 Envirothon Resources

The Pennsylvania Envirothon Board of Directors is pleased to announce that the 2014 Envirothon resources will be available by mid-November. Teachers and students can review and download most of the information needed to prepare for the 2014 Envirothon competitions. Visit: www.envirothonpa.org and click on the sidebar category “Station Training.”



Or...

The 2014 Teacher Resource Packets and new study resources will be delivered to your county’s Envirothon Coordinator by the end of October. If you do not receive them, please contact your county Conservation District office or the Pennsylvania Envirothon office.

Envirothon Teachers Learn about Soils/Land Use and Forestry

On June 20th at Bald Eagle State Park, more than 30 Envirothon teachers and coordinators participated in the State Envirothon's very first hands-on approach training on the study of soil/land use and forestry specifically geared to cover the Envirothon learning objectives.

Yuri Plowden and Mike McDevitt, U.S.D.A. Natural Resource Conservation Service soil scientists, presented a basic introduction to soils, challenged the teachers with soil observation exercises—texturing, color, pH testing, Web Soil Survey—and asked participants to utilize these newly learned skills to complete a soil data sheet by having them judge a soil pit and surrounding landscape. The attendees received several teaching tools, such as Munsell soil color pages, Cornell pH testing kits, spray bottles, professionally analyzed soil texture samples, tape measures, and several ideas and activities.



Attendees examine soil horizons, colors, textures, stoniness, and landscape while in an open soil pit.



Attendees discuss their findings to determine whether or not a house can be built with a septic system or if this land can be developed or used in agriculture.



Attendees gathering soil samples which were analyzed at The Pennsylvania State University.

The attendees also received training from Ed Dix, PA Department of Conservation Natural Resources Forest Program Specialist. The forestry training included lessons on tree measurement using a Biltmore stick, a diameter tape, and clinometers. In addition, they learned about tree identification by studying leaves, twigs, buds, bark, and other characteristics. The attendees received a Biltmore stick, diameter tape, Common Trees Guide, Summer Tree Key, and lesson plans.



What is the tree height? Attendees learn how to use a Biltmore stick and other tree measurement devices.



What type of tree is this? Attendees use their Common Trees of PA and summer tree keys to identify different species.



Tree identification lessons and techniques are explained and explored with the foresters.

The workshop was made possible with funding received through an Environmental Education Grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

Pennsylvania Envirothon 2013 – THANK YOU SPONSORS AND PARTNERS!

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

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North American Envirothon

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Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Pennsylvania Game Commission

U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service

PA Grazing Land Conservation Initiative

PA Envirothon Offers Mini-Grants to County Conservation Districts

The grant funding provided by DEP has enabled the Pennsylvania Envirothon to develop a Mini-Grant program that will award up to \$500 to county conservation districts. The funding provided through this program must be used to directly benefit a conservation district's high school Envirothon program.

The mini-grant funding can be used towards projects such as: outreach efforts (presentations to other groups, state education meetings, state environmental education association meetings, etc.); advisor training workshops (i.e., mileage to county/state sessions); purchase of additional Envirothon resource material/teaching tools (Biltmore sticks, Identifiers, etc.); development of an exhibit or brochures to promote Envirothon; awards (i.e., trophies, T-shirts); team travel to the competition (county and/or state); registration for competition (county and/or state); costs to cover substitute teachers for Envirothon advisors. Other suggested projects will be considered upon PA Envirothon Board approval.

Mini-Grant applications will be available in September and are due no later than November 15, 2013. Funding is provided on a reimbursement basis at the completion of the project. To receive mini-grant reimbursement, all final reports and supporting materials must be received by the Pennsylvania Envirothon office no later than June 1, 2014. For additional information, please contact the Pennsylvania Envirothon office.

PA Envirothon Rules

The Pennsylvania Envirothon Board of Directors will review, revise, and clarify the rules of the Pennsylvania Envirothon at its upcoming planning meeting. We apologize for the misunderstandings that occurred with the 2013 state event. It is the Board's intention to clarify ALL the rules so that everyone understands them prior to the state competition.

Many of you have shared your comments and input regarding the rules and how they are followed. For those of you who would like to make suggestions, please forward them no later than September 13 to Lorelle Steach, Program Coordinator, at paenvirothon@pennswoods.net.

More information will be shared following the planning meeting, which is scheduled for mid-September. Updated and revised documents will be available by late October on the PA Envirothon website at www.envirothonpa.org.

Sponsorship Opportunities Available

Your gift helps support Pennsylvania Envirothon and its natural resource conservation education efforts, scholarship program, and education and training programs. With your help, Pennsylvania Envirothon will continue to promote a future of conservation and protection of the environment.

CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTION FORM (All contributions are 501(c)(3) tax deductible.)

Thank you in advance for your generous donation. It will make a difference.

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|--|---|
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Upcoming Events at a Glance

October–November 2013

- Coordinators begin contacting and recruiting Envirothon teams.
- 2014 Teacher Resource Packets will be available by late October.
- County Envirothon Coordinator meetings scheduled for:
 - October 7— Berks CCD
 - October 17— Jefferson CCD
 - October 18 — Forbes State Forest (Westmoreland County)
 - October 24 — Sullivan CCD

April–May 2014

County Envirothon events sponsored in Pennsylvania's 67 counties.

May 20 & 21, 2014

Pennsylvania State Envirothon — Susquehanna University and PPL Montour Preserve

July 20–25, 2014

North American Envirothon — University of Georgia, Athens, GA.

2015

North American Envirothon — Missouri State University, Springfield, MO



Mark your calendars!

Our Mission

The Pennsylvania Envirothon educates high school students in natural resources and environmental sciences. The program emphasizes the importance of environmental sensitivity while stressing the need to achieve a social, ecological, and economic balance. The learning objectives emphasize awareness, knowledge, and attitudes through outdoor hands-on applications while addressing the complex natural resource concerns facing today's world as well as the challenges of tomorrow.

For more information:

Pennsylvania Envirothon
702 West Pitt Street, Suite 3
Bedford, PA 15522

Phone: 814-623-7900 ext. 111

Email: paenvirothon@pennswoods.net

website: www.envirothonpa.org

Program Coordinator: Lorelle Steach