

MASSACHUSETTS ENVIR THON

news release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Local teens to compete in 30th annual Mass. Envirothon on May 18th at Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary, Lincoln

Agricultural soil and water conservation is 2017 current issue

LINCOLN, Mass., April 26, 2017 – Ask any teenager participating in this year's Massachusetts Envirothon environmental education program and they'll tell you that local agriculture is booming in Massachusetts. For the past school year, they've been researching farming in their communities – from urban community gardens to rural orchards and pastures, from row crops to working forests – and assessing its benefits and its effects on local land and water resources, ecosystems and biodiversity.

Those 250 students from nearly 40 Massachusetts communities are headed to Mass Audubon's Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary in Lincoln, Mass. on Thursday, May 18th to compete in the 30th annual Massachusetts Envirothon. At the event, they will present what they've learned about agricultural soil and water conservation, and test their knowledge of the area's soils, forests, water, and wildlife.

"For years, the Envirothon has been challenging Massachusetts students in an effort to educate and prepare solutions for environmental," said **Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton**. "By engaging today's youth on subjects such as farming, we are ensuring the next generation will have the passion, dedication, and desire to ensure Massachusetts' agricultural sector continues to thrive in every region of the state."

At the outdoor field competition event, teams will rotate through four "ecostations" where they will answer written questions and engage in hands-on activities such as soil analysis, wildlife habitat assessment, tree identification, and water quality measures. Each team will have up to 10 participants and will split into specialized sub-teams during the competition, each focusing their efforts at different ecostations.

At the fifth station, the Current Issue, each team will give a 15 minute presentation on "Agricultural Soil and Water Conservation" to a panel of judges. Teams have been researching the Current Issue in their own community in preparation for their presentation. Each panel of judges includes concerned citizens and environmental professionals from government agencies, non-profit organizations, academia and private industry. Teams were asked to identify a soil and water conservation issue critical to their community, assess potential solutions, and make specific recommendations for action.

"These teams work hard getting to know their local ecosystems and how their communities depend on them. We test their scientific knowledge, but we also like to hear their stories about how they have gotten muddy, cold, and tired, and otherwise had fun and fallen in love with nature in their neighborhood. The best hope for the future comes from engaged, scientifically literate citizens who care about their communities and the environment," said **Massachusetts Envirothon Steering Committee Chair Will Snyder** of the University of Massachusetts Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment.

(more)

“Envirothon makes environment science relevant to students’ lives by connecting them to real places, real environmental issues, and real people who are working to protect the environment. It demonstrates how scientific understanding of how natural systems work can inform and inspire solutions to the environmental challenges we face today and in the future,” said **Kris Scopinich, Director of Education, Mass Audubon**. “We could not be more thrilled to host the next generation of conservation leaders at Mass Audubon’s Drumlin Farm. These students inspire all of us and keep us hopeful for our future.”

“The Envirothon is more than just a competition about environmental knowledge. Many teams have taken what they’ve learned and put it to work in an action/service project in their community. The program aims to prepare the next generation for the stewardship work that needs to be done,” said **Snyder**. “And this annual competition actually becomes a festive gathering of the environmental community of Massachusetts. At informal lunchtime roundtables, teams will share stories from their EnviroTreks – places they visited, people they talked to, outdoor experiences, and service projects – during the past year.”

The 2017 Massachusetts Envirothon is made possible through the contributions of partnering agencies and organizations, including financial support from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs, the U.S. Forest Service, the Massachusetts Grange, Environmental Business Council of New England, Wegman’s supermarkets and local conservation districts.

Fifteen federal and state environmental agencies, conservation districts, non-profit organizations, higher educational institutions, and businesses provide expertise and help organize the event. Dozens of volunteers will also be on hand on May 18th to handle all the event logistics from setting up tents, tables and chairs, checking-in teams, serving food, scoring tests and cleaning up.

For more information on the Massachusetts Envirothon visit www.massenvirothon.org.

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2017 PARTICIPATING TEAMS

- **Acton-Boxborough** Regional High School
- **Andover** High School
- **Ashland** High School
- **Bedford** High School
- Bristol County Agricultural High School (**Dighton**)
- **Brockton** High School/ Wildland Trust
- David Prouty High School (**Spencer**)
- **Deerfield** Academy
- **Dighton-Rehoboth** High School
- Doherty Memorial High School (**Worcester**)
- Essex Technical High School, Natural Resource Management (**Danvers**)
- Greater **New Bedford** Voc-Tech High School
- **Greenfield** High School
- **Holyoke** High School
- Innovation Academy Charter School (**Tyngsboro**)
- **Leicester** High School
- **Lexington** High School
- **Mashpee** Wampanoag Tribe
- **Millbury** Jr./Sr. High School
- **Middleboro** High School
- **Monson** Environmental Action Team (MEAT)
- NEARI (**Holyoke**)
- **Newton** North High School
- **Newton** South High School
- Norfolk County Agricultural High School (**Walpole**)
- Oliver Ames High School (**Easton**)
- Pioneer Valley Regional School (**Northfield**)
- Quabbin Regional High School (**Barre**)
- **Reading** Memorial High School
- **Rockland** High School
- **Salem** High School
- **Seekonk** High School
- Shepherd Hill Regional High School (**Dudley**)
- **Somerset Berkley** Regional High School
- **South Hadley** High School
- **Springfield** Central High School
- **Worcester** Technical High School