

MASSACHUSETTS ENVIROTHON

news release

www.massenvirothon.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bay State teens to focus on invasive species at 2016 Mass. Envirothon on May 12th

29th annual environmental competition to be held at Hopkinton State Park

HOPKINTON, Mass., April 13, 2016 – The spread of species to new regions of the globe has been an essential feature of biological evolution and the development of ecological communities. In the past century, however, the magnitude of change and ecological disruption has increased dramatically. For the past school year, high school students across the Bay State have been researching the role of human activity in the spread and control of invasive species as they participate in the Massachusetts Envirothon environmental education program.

Those 250 students from more than 30 Massachusetts communities are headed to Hopkinton State Park in Hopkinton, Mass. on Thursday, May 12th to share what they've learned about managing invasive species, as well as the area's soils, forests, water, and wildlife as they compete in the 29th annual Massachusetts Envirothon.

"Invasive species can have long lasting effects on our native ecosystems, and the Baker-Polito Administration remains committed to managing, controlling, and where possible, eradicating them in order to protect the Commonwealth's natural resources," said **Matthew Beaton, Secretary of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs**. "The Envirothon not only increases awareness of significant environmental issues, such as the spreading of invasive species, but most importantly, it engages and challenges young minds to think and prepare for possible solutions for future generations."

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 "Managing Invasive Species" 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 assess how invasive species may affect their community and to recommend steps that their city or town and individuals, including young people, should take to respond to the challenge.

"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**.

"The Envirothon is more than just a competition about environmental knowledge. It's a gathering of the environmental community of Massachusetts. It aims to prepare the next generation for the stewardship work that needs to be done," said Snyder.

The 2016 Massachusetts Envirothon is made possible through the contributions of partnering agencies and organizations, including financial support from the 2014 Massachusetts Environmental Bond Bill, 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 12th 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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2016 PARTICIPATING TEAMS

- **Acton-Boxborough** Regional High School
- **Andover** High School
- **Ashland** High School
- **Bedford** High School
- David Prouty High School, **Spencer**
- **Deerfield** Academy
- Doherty Memorial High School, **Worcester**
- Greater **New Bedford** Voc-Tech High School
- **Greenfield** High School
- Innovation Academy Charter School, **Tyngsboro**
- **Leicester** High School
- **Leominster** High School
- **Lexington** High School
- McDuffie School, **Granby**
- MEAT **Monson** Environmental Action Team
- **Millbury** Jr./Sr. High School
- Mount Greylock Regional School, **Williamstown**
- **Newton** North High School
- **Newton** South High School
- Oliver Ames High School, **Easton**
- Pioneer Valley Regional School, **Northfield**
- Quabbin Regional High School, **Barre**
- **Reading** Memorial High School
- **Rockland** High School
- SABIS International Charter School, **Springfield**
- **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
- Wildland Trust/**Brockton** High School
- **Sutton** High School
- Wachusett Regional High School, **Holden**
- **Worcester** Technical High School