

MASSACHUSETTS ENVIROTHON

news release

www.massenvirothon.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NOTE: High resolution photos, including action shots and team group photos will be posted to <https://www.flickr.com/photos/maenvirothon> starting the afternoon of Friday, May 19th. Please call or e-mail the contact above if you don't see a particular team or need IDs for people in the shots.

Local teens take top honors at 30th annual Mass. Envirothon

LINCOLN, Mass., May 18, 2017 – The message from teenagers who participated in this year's Massachusetts Envirothon environmental education program was clear: 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 converged on 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 presented what they've learned about agricultural soil and water conservation, and tested their knowledge of the area's soils, forests, water, and wildlife.

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

At the fifth station, the Current Issue, each team gave a 15 minute presentation to a panel of judges about their research into "Agricultural Soil and Water Conservation" in their own community. Each panel of judges included concerned citizens and environmental professionals from government agencies, non-profit organizations, academia and private industry. Teams were asked to assess the potential for producing local food, given the soil, water, and people resources in their community, and to recommend what might be done to protect and enhance soil health and water quality at the same time.

This year's top scoring teams are:

Overall Score

1 st place	Lexington High School
2 nd place	Newton South High School
3 rd place	Newton North High School

Current Issue Presentation

1 st place	Newton North High School
2 nd place	Lexington High School
3 rd place (tie)	Leicester High School
	Brockton High School / Wildland Trust
4 th place	Shepherd Hill Regional High School
5 th place	Dighton Rehoboth Regional High School

Forestry Ecostation

1st place	Lexington High School
2nd place	Newton North High School
3rd place	Newton South High School
4th place	Essex Technical High School
5th place	Bristol County Agricultural High School

Wildlife Ecostation

1st place	Lexington High School
2nd place (tie)	Newton South High School
	Acton-Boxborough Regional High School
3rd place	Newton North High School
4th place	Essex Technical High School
5th place	Pioneer Valley Regional High School

Water Ecostation

1st place	Newton South High School
2nd place	Essex Technical High School
3rd place	Lexington High School
4th place	Newton North High School
5th place (tie)	Rockland High School
	Innovation Academy Charter School

Soils Ecostation

1st place	Newton South High School
2nd place	Deerfield Academy
3rd place	Lexington High School
4th place	Doherty Memorial High School
5th place	Worcester Technical High School

"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."

"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.

"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 have hosted 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 after the competition, 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 was 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 were also on hand 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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