



# MASSACHUSETTS ENVIROTHON

May 26, 2025

John Staley, Principal  
Doherty Memorial High School  
299 Highland Street  
Worcester MA 01602

Dear Principal Staley,

**Congratulations to the Doherty Memorial High School Envirothon Team for their hard work and success at the 2025 Massachusetts Envirothon!** In addition to placing ninth overall in the [competition](#), the team was one of 3 teams across the state completing requirements for the Mass Envirothon [Community Engagement Award](#) for their work on the 2025 [Current Issue Forest Stewardship: Resilience for a Changing Climate](#).

2025 participating team members – all from Worcester – included:

Sam Swenson-Adorno	grade 11
Paul Bellin	grade 12
Ersa Tace	grade 11
Aleandra Kusi	grade 12
Elena Melka	grade 11
Jailene Matias	grade 12
Grace Roberts	grade 11

The team was coached by Doherty teachers Stacey Hill and Jess Racine.

**The Mass Envirothon Community Engagement Award** recognizes teams who engage in thorough and wide-ranging community investigations as they prepare for their Current Issue presentation AND THEN take this new knowledge and put it to work in an action project in their community. Their work exemplifies the integration of science and civic knowledge and skills and the building of community connections that are critical for addressing environmental issues in a democratic society. Teams often engage in the kind of student-led civic activity envisioned in the Massachusetts 2018 [Act to Promote and Enhance Civic Engagement](#).

Qualifying for this award in 2025 required teams to become familiar with tree and forestland conservation initiatives that are occurring in their communities. They conducted in-person interviews, visited forested sites (large and small), and investigated and made recommendations for web resources and resource organizations. Documentation of teams' work – and reflection on what they found – was collected using the [Research and Action Checklist](#). In addition to documenting their efforts, Envirothon Community Award teams participate in a zoom interview that offers the chance for a wider public to learn about the teams' work and perspectives.

**What they did:** In their research, the Doherty team visited three varied forest sites within the city – Newton Hill, Foster's Gorge, and the Hadwen Arboretum – and also visited Harvard University's

research forest in Petersham. Their interviews brought them into contact with land managers, landscape architects, community activists, and others – including No Loose Braids, representing the Nipmuc legacy – who gave them hope about taking action towards their future in an era of climate change. Through these visits they became acquainted with both upland and wetland forest ecosystems. They encountered a variety of management strategies used to balance the needs of people and forest land in city park, research forest, and arboretum settings. Their experiences showed them the psychological benefits – as well the ecological and carbon sequestration benefits – of trees in urban areas. They concluded that Worcester has some large green spaces, but it is a densely populated city with little potential for increasing the amount of conserved land on a large scale. The team’s main recommendation was to take care of existing green spaces and to add small pockets of green where this is possible.

For their action project, the team participated in Harvard Forest’s “Our Changing Forests” research project. They set up a 10m x 10m plot on Newton Hill and collected tree species and size data to contribute to long term research on the impact of climate change.

Envirothon teams gain strong environmental knowledge and community connections through their research and action experiences. They develop teamwork, stewardship values, and skills for civic engagement. They show that they are capable of college level work and that they can make a real contribution to their communities. Their coaches deserve special commendation for the time and care they put into working with the team.

**Documentation of the Doherty team’s work** can be found at the [2025 Community Engagement Awards](#) webpage.

Thank you for your support of the Doherty team and their coaches! More about the Envirothon can be found at <https://www.massenvirothon.org>.

Sincerely,



Will Snyder  
Massachusetts Envirothon Steering Committee  
[wsnyder@umass.edu](mailto:wsnyder@umass.edu)

cc: Rachel Monárrez, Superintendent  
Stacey Hill, Envirothon Coach  
Jess Racine, Envirothon Coach  
Katharine S. Hinkle, Harvard Forest  
Representative John J. Mahoney  
Senator Robyn K. Kennedy  
Scott O’Connell, Worcester Telegram & Gazette  
Rebecca Tepper, Massachusetts Secretary of Energy & Environmental Affairs  
Stephanie Cooper, Undersecretary for Environment, Massachusetts EEA