

Teaching Tomorrow's Conservation Leaders Today

The Challenge

Today's teens don't spend time outdoors, and understand little about the natural processes that people rely on for clean air, water, and an ample supply of forest products.

The Solution

Many State and Federal agencies along with non-governmental conservation groups work in cooperative partnerships to organize and deliver the Envirothon program in West Virginia. During the school year, high school students from around the State learn all they can about aquatics, soil, wildlife, forestry, and an environmental topic that addresses current issues with help from a team advisor. Advisors are provided with program learning objectives and encouraged to utilize field trips to natural resource sites or museums and presentations given by natural resource professionals to help students gain a better understanding of natural resource values and management.

In the spring, the students gather in teams of five for a hands-on field competition that challenges them to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills. The competition also includes a problem solving oral presentation based on the current environmental topic. Teams compete for college scholarships, and the distinction of representing the State in the national Canon Envirothon competition.

Resulting Benefits

- Students learn about natural resources and environmental issues facing society.
- The program is conducted outdoors, allowing the students a chance to work and learn in a real-world setting, guided by natural resource professionals.
- Students gain experience in public speaking by developing a solution to a natural resource management issue and presenting their solution to a panel of

*"Together, we are making big strides in providing opportunities for our youth and in taking care of our natural resources."
James Harman, WV Envirothon Chairman*



Envirothon student measures the diameter at breast height (dbh) of a tree for one of the test questions at the forestry station.

judges comprised of natural resource management professionals.

- The program provides students with experience in environmentally-oriented activities, teaching them about gathering and analyzing information before making management decisions involving natural resources.
- The top five teams receive scholarships for their college education.

Sharing Success

- Team members from winning teams have given presentations at the West Virginia Conservation Partnership Conference, the State competitions, and at other venues promoting the benefits of the program for students and the environment.
- The West Virginia Library Commission produces a television show, "Conservation in the Mountain State." The program features the Envirothon following the State competition and includes the advisors and team members from the winning team. The program airs on local cable stations and in high schools throughout the State.
- Community newspapers and television stations highlight the value of the Envirothon program for raising environmental literacy, and encourage schools to participate in the program.



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