



UPDATES

Pennsylvania Envirothon

January 2021

2021 Pennsylvania Envirothon goes Virtual

Pennsylvania Envirothon is proud to host one of the state's largest natural resource education competitions. The Envirothon provides thousands of students with the knowledge and tools necessary to address the natural resource challenges facing today's world.

Rather than an in-person event, we are excited to announce that Pennsylvania Envirothon will hold a virtual State Competition that will include station testing and an oral presentation component. The Envirothon is a "team" competition, and the 2021 event will be held as such. Teams will compete for scholarship awards which, in 2021, will be expanded to include the top seven teams with each team member in first place receiving \$1,000, second place \$750, third place \$500, fourth place \$350, fifth place \$250, sixth place \$200, and seventh place \$150.



GRAPHIC BY MADDIE STANISCH

County Envirothon competitions, either virtually or in-person, will take place during April. The virtual Pennsylvania Envirothon State Competition schedule will be slightly different from an in-person competition.

Station Testing

The State Competition "Station Testing" will take place on Monday and Tuesday, May 10 & 11. The two different dates will allow teams to choose when is the best time to get together to complete the five (5) station tests. The test links and instructions will be sent to all REGISTERED teams on Monday, May 10 by 9:00 a.m. Teams will have from 9:00 a.m. Monday, May 10 through 4:00 p.m., Tuesday, May 11 to complete all five (5) station tests. All tests will be timed and teams will have only one chance to complete the test once the test link is opened.

The Pennsylvania Envirothon Scoring Committee will tabulate all test scores and determine which teams are in the Top 15. We have chosen to only have the Top 15 teams compete in the 2021 Oral Presentation Component and for the top prizes because of time and large group gathering restrictions. Pennsylvania Envirothon will announce the "Top 15" Teams, those who will compete in the Oral Presentation Component, on Wednesday, May 12 no later than 11:00 a.m.

Oral Component Presentation

The Pennsylvania Envirothon oral component presentation segment is taking on a new look and transitioning into the age of technology. Oral presentations will be done digitally, moving away from the use of poster boards and markers. The Oral Component (OC) offers Envirothon teams a chance to address real-life environmental problems as presented through a written scenario. This transition provides teams with the full experience of developing a presentation based on a written scenario from start to finish.

The "Top 15" teams will receive an email message by Noon on May 12. The message will include completion and submission instructions, the scenario and supporting documentation, and the Addendum to the Pennsylvania Envirothon Rules and Regulations, which includes the oral presentation component.

Teams will have from Noon, May 12 through 8:00 a.m., May 20 to complete and submit their 10-minute pre-recorded Oral Presentation. Once the team has its presentation completed and recorded, it will be submitted to the Pennsylvania Envirothon according to the provided instructions.

On May 24 or 25, all 15 teams will participate in a “live Zoom” 10-minute Question & Answer session with a panel of 5 judges. Teams will be assigned a Zoom meeting time between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Teams do not have to be in the same room while participating in the Q&A, but each team member will need to join, participate, and be visible during the Zoom session.

The Addendum to the Rules and Regulations with revisions reflective of the 2021 virtual competition will be posted to the Pennsylvania Envirothon website under the Registration tab.

On May 26, the Pennsylvania Envirothon Scoring Committee will tabulate and combine the Station Testing and Oral Presentation scores to determine the winning team. The Pennsylvania Envirothon Board of Directors is planning to hold a live Awards Ceremony on May 27 to announce the 2021 Pennsylvania Envirothon State Champ. Stay tuned for more details!

“New” Pennsylvania Envirothon mobile app

Recently, [Pennsylvania Envirothon](#) and Digital-first Sponsor [PSECU](#) launched a free, educational app. Dubbed “Pennsylvania Envirothon,” the app is now available for download for both Android and Apple devices.

“Envirothon is a fun, academic event. It challenges high school students to think critically about the natural world and their roles in it. Envirothon combines in-class curriculum and outdoor training, helping students to learn more about our natural resources, flora and fauna, and current environmental issues,” said Pennsylvania Envirothon Executive Director Lorelle Steach. “We believe our new app will play an even greater role in team preparation, especially with many students experiencing distance learning.”



The Pennsylvania Envirothon app was made possible with financial support from Pennsylvania’s anytime, anywhere digital credit union, PSECU.

“As an organization that has long embraced technology and its benefits, PSECU has been able to offer our members top-of-the-line digital tools and

resources to securely and conveniently manage their finances anytime, anywhere,” explained PSECU President and CEO George Rudolph. “We’re sure that the new Pennsylvania Envirothon app will provide students – and the greater community of users – with many of the advantages of digitalization, too, all the while educating them as future environmental leaders. We couldn’t be prouder to serve as the project’s Digital-first Sponsor.”

The Pennsylvania Envirothon app encourages users to learn about topics including soils and land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife, and environmental issues, and research natural resource information – all while experiencing Pennsylvania’s outdoors. Features of the app include:

- Links to [Envirothon Station Training](#) references
- Guides to identifying trees, fish, wildlife, and more
- Audio and photo files for identifying birds and their songs as well as frog and toad calls
- Quizzing options to test lessons learned
- Information about Digital-first Sponsor PSECU

Austin Jadowiec, an Envirothon alumnus and junior at the University of Pittsburgh pursuing a double major in math and computer engineering, developed and designed the new Pennsylvania Envirothon app. “The Envirothon is a wonderful opportunity, no matter what your field of study is,” he shared about his experience with the competition. “If something interests you, chase it! You never know what opportunities it may lead to in the future.”

“We hope users will find this portable guide useful as they train for Envirothon competitions or while they just enjoy all nature has to offer,” Steach added.



MWEE Training for Envirothon Teachers

Envirothon is partnering with the Pennsylvania Environmental Literacy Task Force to offer virtual MWEE training for Envirothon teachers. Two (2) Act 48 credit hours will be provided. Those who attend will learn why the implementation of Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) is a high priority in Pennsylvania schools and how one can utilize this framework within one's classroom, no matter which watershed one lives in.

The training will occur on March 18, 2021, from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. For more information and to register please contact [Pennsylvania Envirothon](#).

Where Are They Now?

Jacob L. Watts, Envirothon Alumnus

Envirothon has been highly influential as I've moved on from high school and into college and beyond. During Envirothon, I learned how to identify the 50 most common trees of PA, how to sustainably manage a farm, and which tracks belong to which wildlife species. These may seem like disjointed, forgettable facts, but to me, they meant the world as I began to put names to all the processes of nature that I grew up loving. I began to understand how the natural world functioned and why human's actions were so important for its conservation. I carried this knowledge and sentiment to college, where I worked in a plant ecology lab, as an outdoor trip leader and sustainability intern.

Now, I have just been awarded the Churchill Scholarship to complete a Master's degree in Plant Sciences at the University of Cambridge in the UK. One day, I hope to be a professor of plant ecology and botany so that I can inspire future generations to understand and love the natural world just as Envirothon inspired me. Jacob L. Watts, 22, is a 2017 graduate of North East High School, Erie County.



Jacob pictured here is measuring tree fern growth in Argentina with some colleagues on an epic journey through Latin America.

Thank you EITC Contributors – Weis and UGI!

Pennsylvania Envirothon recently received a generous contribution from Weis and UGI Utilities through the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program.



Weis Markets, a leader in sustainability and social responsibility, generously contributed \$3,000. Weis Markets' mission closely matches that of the Pennsylvania Envirothon in that both strive to move toward a future of sustainability to minimize the impact on our natural resources for today as well as for tomorrow.



UGI generously contributed \$7,000. For UGI, environmental responsibility is a core part of its business – “from greening its facilities and operations to exploring new greener technologies.” UGI is “committed to helping its customers conserve resources by providing energy saving tips and forging partnerships for accomplishing environmentally-friendly projects.”

The EITC contributions assist in providing conservation districts and teachers with educational resources and hands-on teaching tools that address environmental education standards. The Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program gives tax credits to eligible businesses contributing to an Educational Improvement Organization such as the Pennsylvania Envirothon.

A Few Notes from a Retiring Envirothon Coordinator

Kim J. Young

One of the highlights of my career has been Envirothon Coordinator for York County for 15 years. Now in our 36th season, we continue to edit and evolve. Here's what I have learned.

Get yourself good help! The Envirothon is a big deal in York, where we offer four separate grade-level events: Senior High, Middle School, 5th & 6th Grades, and 3rd & 4th Grades. We have 16 participating School Districts (plus home schools, charter schools, cyber schools, & private schools). Over 1,000 students participate each year. One person cannot do that alone.

We have a wonderful Envirothon Committee made up of cooperating agency personnel, retired teachers, and various volunteers who help secure study resources for our lower grades, teach study sessions, create tests, answer sheets and judges' keys, and run their testing station at the spring competitions.

Get organized. Being organized, communicating often, and offering plenty of templates and guidance have been key. We provide Coaches/Advisors Manuals each year for each grade level in addition to their study resources. Everything they need to guide them through each season is included in the manual, along with checklists for them, and required registration forms. Updating the manuals each fall helps me get organized too.

Communicate. Emails are sent to coaches regularly with updates and reminders. We have a York County Envirothon Coaches Facebook page and our local nature center posts pop-up events and videos for coaches to take advantage of.



Survey your coaches. Ask how they recruit & teach their teams and share with other coaches, especially new coaches. Ask what they need. We have annual Coaches Meetings & Open Houses to kick off each new season, hand out resources, interact with coaches, and offer mini-training workshops for those interested.

Learn to ask for money. Funding is needed to pull off four large events. When I started, we averaged about \$6,000/year in sponsorship. We made one simple change and the following year we received \$20,000. Send out Sponsorship Letters & Forms with specific Sponsor Levels. It is a simple marketing technique. Companies want to know what to give you – don't make them guess. Name your sponsorship levels & assign amounts. We now average \$20,000 - \$34,000 a year. Our first letter & form is sent in October with a reminder in February. Donations of \$500 and up get their name/logo on the back of the shirt. Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTOs) are also a great source of donations. Photograph your events. The photos enhance all your publications throughout the year, and the sponsors love to see where their money went.

Be age-appropriate. Make sure your lower grade study resources and tests reflect the age you are reaching out to. Retired teachers and coaches can help. It could be as simple as breaking one sentence into two or making the font on a test bigger or switching the arrangement of matching questions on a test. An 8-year-old does not read text on a page the same way a 16-year-old does.

Create fair tests. Don't allow students to split hairs with you. The good students know their resources inside and out. Be careful how you word your questions. There are no "most-correct" answers! There is one correct answer. Make sure your tests are designed to test the student's knowledge of the subject, not the reading level of the student trying to decipher the question.

Get your graders on the same page. Make sure each station knows exactly which answers are acceptable. Are you accepting both phosphorus and fosferus? Sure, you know what the students mean, but is that fair to give points to the team that did not spell the word correctly, no matter the age? And yes, spelling counts. Sometimes spelling is the only way we can break a tie!

Have fun and enjoy! It goes fast.

Kim will continue as a volunteer on the Pennsylvania Envirothon Board of Directors.