



UPDATES

Pennsylvania Envirothon

Winter 2017

Penncrest High School Takes Top Honors at the 2017 NCF-Envirothon

A five-member team of high school students from Pennsylvania has been named the winner of the 2017 NCF-Envirothon, a leading environmental education program run by the National Conservation Foundation (NCF). The top three scoring teams were awarded a total of \$30,000 in cash prizes at an awards ceremony held at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Maryland, on July 28.

The 2017 NCF-Envirothon's cash prizes were sponsored by Smithfield Foods, the world's largest pork producer and processor. Other event sponsors included the National Association of Conservation Districts, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, and other organizations on the official NCF-Envirothon website.

This year, high schools from 45 states, seven Canadian provinces, and two Chinese provinces participated in the NCF-Envirothon at the state/provincial, regional, and international levels.

"NCF offers its congratulations to the winning team and all the students who participated in Envirothon competitions over the last year," said Carly Burton, the program manager for the NCF-Envirothon. "This year's competitors blew the judges away with their advanced critical thinking skills and mastery of soils, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife, and agricultural soil and water conservation stewardship."

The 2018 Envirothon will be hosted at Idaho State University in Pocatello, Idaho. For more information and photos, visit the [NCF-Envirothon](http://www.ncfenvirothon.org) website.

The top 10 teams from the 2017 NCF-Envirothon were:

Place	High School	City/County	State/Province
1st	Penncrest High School	Media	Pennsylvania
2nd	The Mount Academy	Esopus	New York
3rd	Hot Springs High School	Truth or Consequences	New Mexico
4th	Pembroke Hill High School	Kansas City	Missouri
5th	Chardon High School	Chardon	Ohio
6th	Oxford High School	Oxford	Mississippi
7th	University of Chicago Lab School	Chicago	Illinois
8th	Vantage Point Education High School	Suwanee	Georgia
9th	Palisades Charter High School	Pacific Palisades	California
10th	Venturing Crew 202	Carroll County	Maryland



Pennsylvania's Team from Penncrest High School, Delaware County
 Photo (l to r): Bill Gill (Smithfield Foods), Mark Samilenko and Chrissa Kuntz (coaches), Rachel Hughes, Dennis Harrsch, Thy-Lan Gale, Abigail Schwartz, Cole Gaboriault, and Millie Langley (NCF-Envirothon).

Thank you, NCF-Envirothon and the Maryland hosts, for a wonderful event!

Pennsylvania Coaches inducted into the NCF-Envirothon Hall of Fame

The next inductees to be included into the NCF-Envirothon Hall of Fame are known to many of you. You know these inductees to be hard working, dedicated and some might even say persistent about educating youth and encouraging future leaders through Envirothon.

These inductees put countless hours into teaching Envirothon subjects to hundreds of students of all ages. The inductees are committed to finding creative ways to train high school students who are now training younger students, in turn making the Envirothon a strong educational program at all levels. The inductees' determination and perseverance in training and educating students about natural resources has produced many teams that have earned numerous wins at county, state, and North American events. This is a true demonstration of passion for the Envirothon.



Like many Envirothon coaches, summers are often interrupted, family vacations put on hold, and special occasions are missed while accompanying teams competing at Envirothon. Tonight's new inductees, a unique team of Envirothon coaches, and one cannot be recognized without the other - a science teacher who started coaching in 1996, and his assistant coach, an English teacher, who started in 1998.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Pennsylvania Envirothon fondly puts forth the names of Mark Samilenko and Chrissa Kuntz as inductees into the NCF-Envirothon Hall of Fame.

Envirothon and Youth Conservation Education Lose Dear Friend - Jan Hampton



Dearest Friend was a greeting that easily identified messages sent by Jan Hampton, a dear friend that on May 16, 2017 left this earth to enter a place of peace and joy.

Jan was a member of the Pennsylvania Envirothon for almost 14 years and was a strong advocate for the program. She had a tremendous passion for teaching kids of all ages the wonders of nature. She participated in environmental education programs organized by the Cameron County Conservation District. She was also very involved in the Cameron County Fair, so much so that this year's Youth Conservation Night, which is held during the fair, was renamed to honor Jan and is now called the Jan Hampton Youth Conservation Night (JHYCN).

Being very crafty was one of Jan's many talents that she shared by blessing the Envirothon board with hand-made gifts at Christmas. Many of us have a collection of Jan's hand-made snowmen adorning our offices and homes.

Jan valued family above everything. She made everyone feel as though one was a part of her family. She had a great sense of humor and quick wit that made people smile. Her laugh lightened even the heaviest of days. She lived life to its fullest, and made a lasting impression on all the lives she touched.

Jan Hampton is greatly missed by her Envirothon family and friends.

2018 Pennsylvania Envirothon State Competition Hosts

The 2018 Pennsylvania Envirothon competition will be held at Susquehanna University and Camp Mount Luther on May 22 and 23.

Susquehanna University (SU) is a nationally known liberal arts college. The university is located in Selinsgrove, PA, a town of about 5,000 situated on the banks of the Susquehanna River, 50 miles north of Harrisburg. SU will serve as the location for event registration, oral component competition, and team lodging. Check out [Susquehanna University](#) for more information.

The Pennsylvania Envirothon is excited to again partner with Camp Mount Luther as the site of the field station testing. Camp Mount Luther serves the church and the community as a location for outdoor ministry and education. Whether a summer camp program, an educational school learning experience, an adult retreat or conference, Mount Luther serves as a year-round setting for growth and learning about environmental concerns and conservation. The Camp is located in central Pennsylvania in Union County near Mifflinburg, which is a 40-minute drive from Susquehanna University. Click here for more information on [Camp Mount Luther](#).

2018 Envirothon Resources

The Pennsylvania Envirothon Board of Directors is pleased to announce that the 2018 Envirothon resources will be available by early October. Teachers and students can review and download most of the information needed to prepare for the 2018 Envirothon competitions. Visit the [Pennsylvania Envirothon](#) website and click on "Station Training."

Pennsylvania Envirothon Scholarship Awards

The Pennsylvania Envirothon has been awarding educational scholarships now for 13 years. Since 2005, we have awarded \$131,250 to more than 200 students from 10 different counties. The scholarship program is supported by donations made by Pennsylvania's County Conservation Districts. Thanks to their generous donations, scholarship awards for the 2017 Pennsylvania Envirothon state competition were increased. We are excited to extend the awards to the top five teams.



Each student on the top five teams at the 2017 state Envirothon competition received the following scholarship awards: First place - \$1,250; Second place - \$750; Third place - \$500; Fourth place - \$300; and Fifth place - \$150.

It is a goal of the Pennsylvania Envirothon to continue to recognize teams at the state competition. Thank you, conservation districts, for supporting the Pennsylvania Envirothon Scholarship program!

2018 Current Environmental Issue

Benefits of Grassland and Pastureland Management

Privately-owned grazing land is an important landscape feature in Pennsylvania. Many people identify pastoral settings with animals grazing on them as good farming practices that are also good for the animals. Grazing and browsing animals are used to manage grasses, forbs, residues, and shrubs on pastures and other grasslands, crop fields, and forests. Well-managed pastures and hay fields provide valuable products, conservation of natural resources, and valuable wildlife habitat, making them assets not only to private land users but also to the greater agricultural and rural communities.



In Pennsylvania, the overall number of farms decreased by 6.5% between 2007 (63,163) and 2012 (59,309). The total number of farm acres in the state is 7,704,444. Of that total, *permanent pasture* constitutes 814,210 acres, and *pastured cropland* constitutes 118,049 acres. The number of farms in Pennsylvania with cropland used solely for grazing or pasture in 2012 was 4,962. The average dollar value per acre of pasture is \$600.00. (Source for all information above: 2012 Ag Census, NASS)

Major benefits realized from grazing and pasture lands include: 1) provision of feed and forage for livestock production, 2) reduction in soil erosion, 3) seasonal protection for nesting birds and wildlife habitat, 4) better water quality, 5) improved soil nutrient content and soil health, and 6) providing food and recreation. While grazing and pasture lands may have their own natural resource *concerns*, conversion of short rotation cropland and hayland to a grazing system may present excellent *opportunities* for livestock producers to distribute nutrients away from concentrated areas and reduce fuel inputs needed to produce feed. Converting short rotation cropland to perennial grasses for producing cellulosic biomass also presents new opportunities for conserving natural resources.

In terms of planning, landowners incorporating pastures and grazing into their livestock operation have access to technical and financial assistance through USDA programs, but there is a need for increased management on the part of the producer which seems to be a prohibiting factor for overall success. While there is a reduced need for fuel and feed inputs, the producer needs to be able to rotate the livestock between pastures to ensure healthy plant growth. Grazing management is the key to healthy, productive pastures and healthy, productive pastures are the key to healthy, productive animals. Working with technical partners such as USDA/NRCS, conservation districts, and Penn State Extension, landowners can get the help they need to get started. There are also professional grazing groups such as Pennsylvania Grazing Lands Coalition and Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative or local producer groups that can advise and address the training and education needs for producers.



Envirothon teams will learn how Best Management Practices are used to protect grazing and pasture lands, improve grazing management schemes, promote pest management, and improve habitat for nesting birds and other wildlife. Information provided will demonstrate the importance of finding the optimum balance between natural resource protection and agricultural use on grazing and pasture lands.

Pennsylvania Envirothon Provides Teaching Tools Thanks to Educational Grants!

One of the goals of the Pennsylvania Envirothon is to make teaching Envirothon topics a hands-on real life, learning experience. In order to do this, we researched and acquired grant funds to support the purchase of teaching tools to help Envirothon programs. **THANK YOU to our generous sponsors!**

EQT Foundation sponsorship helped us provide Biotic Indicators of Water Quality Riker Mount Displays that are ideal for providing students a visual representation of organisms used as indicators of water quality.

UGI Utilities EITC funding helped us provide soil profile posters used in lieu of an actual soil pit to study soil characteristics, best management practices, and conservation techniques.

PPL's Sustaining Grant helped us provide additional soil profile posters plus identification mounts of leaves and seeds of common trees, which guide students to compare and contrast and to identify different types of leaves and seeds, leaf arrangements, and habitats.

County Envirothon Coordinators will receive these teaching tools at the fall regional county Envirothon coordinator meetings scheduled for mid-October to early November.

Pennsylvania Envirothon App...Resources on the Go!



With support from the PA State Envirothon Board, we're thrilled to report that the PA Envirothon App continues to evolve as it enters its 3rd year. The objective to increase accessibility to educational, mobile content beyond traditional websites was met with great success as downloads and usage have steadily increased the last 2 years. The app was created to allow (and encourage) students and educators access to educational content "on the fly."

With a focus on convenience and user-friendliness, the Clarion Conservation District, working with a local developer, strives to improve resource materials, instructional videos, and add features. 2018 will include new resources for Wildlife and the Current Issue in a user-friendly platform.

Research shows that website visits among young people are on the decline—students get most of their information from mobile apps and social media. So far, the apps have exceeded our expectations throughout Pennsylvania, the USA, and the world with over 2,000 users!

Both students and teachers are using the app for an immersive, first-hand, learning experience in the content areas they're studying, whether it's prepping for the Envirothon or Biology class.

Beyond the classroom, nature lovers everywhere are using the audio files to identify birds, frogs and toads, and hone their knowledge in other subject areas.

Stay tuned for PA Envirothon App 3.0!

2018 NCF-Envirothon

[NCF-Envirothon and Idaho Envirothon](#) will welcome teams from across Canada, China, and the United States as they embark upon Idaho State University located in Pocatello, Idaho to compete in the 30th annual international Envirothon. The competition will take place during the week of July 22 – 27, 2018. Approximately fifty-five teams will compete in the weeklong event for cash awards sponsored by Smithfield Foods and the National Conservation Foundation (NCF).