

# New Jersey Envirothon

## 2006-2007 Annual Newsletter



Sponsored by the Conservation Partnership: New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts, New Jersey Dept of Agriculture/State Soil Conservation Committee, USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension, and New Jersey Dept of Environmental Protection

10th Edition

September 2006

### 2007 Envirothon

The 2007 NJ Envirothon competition will be held on May 12, 2007 at the Lighthouse Center For Natural Resource Education in Waretown, NJ.

The Current Theme for 2007 is *Alternative/Renewable Energy*.

Information about the NJ Envirothon is available at your local Soil Conservation District office or online at <http://nj.nacdnet.org/envirothon/>.



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### 2006 New Jersey Envirothon, 43 Teams Compete

By Karen Rowe, Education Coordinator, Freehold Soil Conservation District

Forty-three teams of high school students from 17 New Jersey counties participated in the 13th annual Envirothon held on May 13th at the Quail Hill Scout Reservation in Manalapan. Mother Nature cooperated with a warm and sunny spring day, even though the forecasters had predicted a very wet weekend.

Students and advisors from many of the schools arrived on Friday to set-up their campsites on the woods edge of Quail Hill. A bountiful buffet dinner was served in Lawrence Lodge followed by s'mores around the campfire and star-gazing activities.

Early Saturday morning, after all the teams registered and helped themselves to breakfast, the opening ceremonies began with welcoming words from New Jersey Ag. Secretary Charles Kuperus, NJDEP Commissioner Lisa Jackson, Freehold SCD Chairman Bill Schauer and other dignitaries. At 9 am, the horn sounded for the testing to begin at the Wildlife, Forestry, Soils, Aquatics, Team Presentation and Current Issue stations. The Current Issue topic was "Water Stewardship in a Changing Climate."

Students handled tree species, wildlife pelts and skulls, fish and aquatic insects, and climbed into pits to identify soil horizons. Teams were also treated to a break station featuring reptiles and snakes.

After the final scores were tallied the winning teams were announced:

- FIRST PLACE:** High Tech High School, Hudson County
- SECOND PLACE:** Sparta High School, Sussex County
- THIRD PLACE:** Kittatinny Regional High School, Sussex County

The High Tech High School Team traveled to the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada to represent New Jersey at the national Canon Envirothon. The 2006 Envirothon was hosted by Freehold SCD and coordinated by the NJ Association of Conservation Districts. Over 100 conservation professionals volunteered at this event with financial support provided by 35 agencies, organizations and businesses.

***The Freehold Soil Conservation District thanks everyone who contributed to the success of the 2006 Envirothon!***



Visit the NJ Envirothon website: <http://nj.nacdnet.org/envirothon>

## The Changing Face of the Current Issue Station

By Glenn Ward, Current Issues Station Coordinator, Cape Atlantic Conservation District

Like a revolving door, the current issue station is constantly on the move from year to year creating new and provocative questions for Envirothon participants. Whether it's invasive species, global warming, or agricultural land conservation, this station covers it all, attempting to hit all the pertinent information in preparation to send the state winner to the Cannon Envirothon.

Because a new Envirothon topic is chosen each year, this presents certain challenges for both staff and students. In a way, the staff who prepares the test are students as well, learning new information in order to create questions for Envirothon participants. The real challenge for staff is creating the hands-on portion of the test where the "specimens" change each year and must be created through creative ingenuity. The challenge for the students is an obvious one. The current issue station encompasses and includes information from all the other stations and is concentrated down to two-fifteen minute tests. That's a lot of information to retain, especially when one is under pressure. Students needn't worry too much about this, as the questions are straightforward and created from information taken from the current issue study guide.

This station is "current" due to the help and cooperation of the NJ Envirothon committee, all NJ Envirothon staff, and especially those people directly involved in the operation and organization of the station.



Students working together to answer questions from the written component of the Current Issues test.

**Become an Envirothon Sponsor! Visit the NJ Envirothon website for more information:**  
<http://nj.nacdn.net/org/envirothon/sponsor.htm>

## Ocean Soil Conservation District will host the 2007 Envirothon Competition Lighthouse Center For Natural Resource Education in Waretown, NJ.

By Christine Raabe, Education Outreach Specialist, Ocean County Soil Conservation District



The Ocean County Soil Conservation District will host the 2007 New Jersey Envirothon, which will be held on May 12, 2007 at a fabulous facility located in Waretown (Ocean Township), New Jersey. The site is known as the Lighthouse Center for Natural Resource Education and is owned by the NJDEP- Division of Fish and Wildlife and is managed by The Natural Resource Education Foundation of New Jersey, Inc., a 501c3 not-for-profit corporation dedicated to environmental leadership through education, research, interpretation and communication. The Foundation, founded more than two decades ago, provides ecological programming and activities through "Experience Barnegat Bay," an experiential education project located at the Lighthouse Center for Natural Resource Education.

The site has much to offer for the Envirothon participants in 2007. The diverse habitats include salt marsh and bay front, a fresh water pond, maritime forest and coastal thicket on 180 acres. In addition, the former camp for the blind has extensive facilities including cabins, dormitories, a rustic lodge, and a large dining hall, all handicapped accessible. The Natural Resource Education Foundation of New Jersey has completed a number of site improvements including a series of six outdoor learning stations which each include interpretive signs, picnic tables and a teaching podium. In addition, there is a curriculum guide and teacher's packet to accompany each themed station.

Ocean County Soil Conservation District is excited to be this year's host and looks forward to great success. For more information about the site, please visit the website at: [www.lighthousecenternj.org](http://www.lighthousecenternj.org).

## Envirothon- Reflections On the Chance of a Lifetime

A Student's Perspective of the Envirothon by Cassandra Abousamak

Twelve random students come together to form High Tech High School's two Envirothon teams. One selfless young teacher agrees to advise this motley crew. Together we create a story of the blind leading the blind on a quest to add another championship to our school's magnificent collection- what can we say, we have school spirit.

Participating in the Envirothon began as a chance to show how much we know about our environment, and obtain bragging rights in the process. After three years at the state level and two years at the Canon level, I conclude that the Envirothon creates a whole new perspective for one's potential.

About 250 students gather at a college campus, somewhere in the United States or Canada each year, to compete in the Canon Envirothon. Every team has a different story, a different method to reaching their level of success. Most of the teams come from rural areas, others, such as ours, from concrete jungles. Everyone however, unites under one common interest, the health and importance of our environment.

Envirothon, for me, evolved into an opportunity to grow and expand my horizons- to share my story and to hear many others- to be a teenager in a much different setting.

Reflecting back on this year's Canon Envirothon, I can deduce, from one perspective, that things did not go according to plan, and therefore, I failed as a captain. Our placement this year was not our best; our focus only knuckled down that week. However, broadening perspective, I realize that success in numerical figures is trivial. A team unity formed that many were fearful would not occur- through busy work lives, summer courses, college processes, and even getting sick the week of competition- I realized that my team handled every aspect of Envirothon with grace, absorbing the experience like a camel at a desert watering hole, and left the competition as positively changed individuals.

Before flying to Winnipeg we met three teams at Chicago O'Hare Airport, along with many Envirothon visitors and committee members, before we noticed that almost every person on our flight was headed to the Canon Envirothon. For a week we immersed ourselves into this new family. Our shirts tell where we hail from and are the best conversation starters. Although it is our second year, my teammate Catherine and I still look eagerly to see how many states and provinces surround us. We see old faces and many new ones, our novice teammates absorbing every morsel with the same amazement.

As a team, we perfected our perception and interpretation of each other's habits and learned to take the days struggles as a stepping stone towards future success. We presented a unified image to the Envirothon community. Whether it be a team effort to answer questions on the field test and to solve our

in- depth presentation problem, or even in taking a few minutes to digress from eight-hour seclusion to laugh at our teammate using a supply bag for a potato-sack race- we embraced the competition as a unit. I felt a sense of pride in my team. Everyone who met team New Jersey enjoyed their company. Many adults who interacted with us, wished us success and said they liked our ingenuity and the way we worked as a unit.

Before we knew it, Friday night was upon us. Training at the Forte Whyte Center and canoeing and counting fish at Oak-Hammock Marsh had passed. Visiting a museum, posing in a "Pirates of the Carribean"-style ship, and shopping at the Forks- a collection of stores at the convergence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, was history. Watching a baseball game, startling the American team by allowing the national anthem to be sung as loud as the Canadian Anthem and relaxing in the Icelandic town of Gimli. Many of us played Ultimate Frisbee, the "official" sport of the Canon Envirothon, and some of us even took our turn at billiards. We had been tested, challenged, and enlighten by various lectures, including one rather comical presentation by a man who refers to himself as Climate Guy. We survived our eight hours of seclusion, enlightening and amusing our team buddies the entire time. And for one final night, we were members of a 250 strong student alliance, so we did what teenagers do best, partied! We danced to an eccentric folk band called Men in Kilts. I decided to learn how to line dance, thanks to the Mississippi and Louisiana teams. The night capped by a late night movie, *Boondock Saints* with about forty or more people in a small student lounge, pickup games of basketball, and endless conversations ended our stay in Manitoba. Sleep-deprived, we headed back to New Jersey with endless stories to tell.

Despite lack of sleep, I found myself wide-awake on the flight home, reflecting. I searched for a meaning for team New Jersey's presence at the 2006 Canon Envirothon. Not until then was I able to realize how much I had seen my own friends grow and change. I realize now the meaning behind leadership is not always to come out as the number one ranked team- my place was to support my friends and encourage them to explore and inquire about the world around them. Team New Jersey received the true Envirothon experience- companionship, connection, exploration, ingenuity, and motivation and we could not ask for more.



High Tech High School Team (New Jersey) poses for a team photo at the 2006 Canon Envirothon, Manitoba, Canada.

## Thanks to the Sponsors of the 2006 Envirothon

*The New Jersey Envirothon is sponsored by the Conservation Partnership: New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts, New Jersey Department of Agriculture, State Soil Conservation Committee, USDA– Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension, and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. The New Jersey Envirothon competition would not be possible without the generous support by these sponsors and the sponsors listed below. Thank you!*

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*New Jersey's 15 soil conservation districts are special purpose subdivisions of the State. They are empowered to conserve and manage soil and water resources in the State. The districts are part of a cooperative network of state, local, and federal agencies authorized by the New Jersey Soil Conservation Act. Technical assistance from the Natural Resource Conservation Service and other USDA agencies is available through the districts. NJ's Soil Conservation Districts provide technical and other assistance to the agricultural community, provide and interpret soil survey information, regulate erosion laden storm water from construction sites and sponsor a wide variety of educational programs. Districts promote the wise use and stewardship of NJ's land and water.*

## 2006 NJ Envirothon Participants

*Congratulations to the students and advisors who represented their schools at the 2006 NJ Envirothon. Forty-three teams from thirty-two schools (thirteen of which were new schools competing for the first time) throughout the State spent the day at Quail Hill Scout Reservation in Manalapan for the competition, but they also spent the year studying in preparation. Their commitment to learning about our natural resources holds well for the future health of our environment.*

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|--|--|---|
| Allentown High School  | Marine Academy of Technology & Environmental Science Team #2 | Scotch Plains Fanwood High Sch. Team #1   |
| Atlantic City High School                                    | Middle Township High School                                  | Scotch Plains Fanwood High Sch. Team #2   |
| Bridgewater-Raritan High School                              | Millville Senior High School                                 | Sparta High School Team #1                |
| Clearview Reg. High – Environmental Club                     | Moorestown Friends School Team #1                            | Sparta High School Team #2                |
| East Brunswick High School                                   | Moorestown Friends School Team #2                            | Teaneck High School                       |
| Florence High School   | Monmouth Regional High School– Life/Environment Club         | Triton Regional High School               |
| Henry Hudson Regional School                                 | Montgomery High School Team #1                               | Vernon Township High School Team #1       |
| Highland Regional High School                                | Montgomery High School Team #2                               | Vernon Township High School Team #2       |
| High Tech High School Team #1                                | New Providence High School                                   | Watchung Hills Regional High Sch. Team #1 |
| High Tech High School Team #2                                | North Hunterdon High School                                  | Watchung Hills Regional High Sch. Team #2 |
| Hopewell Valley Central High Sch. Team #1                    | Oakcrest High School   | West Morris Mendham High Sch. Team #1     |
| Kittatinny Regional High School Team #1                      | Ocean Twp. High School- Spartans                             | West Morris Mendham High Sch. Team #2     |
| Kittatinny Regional High School Team #2                      | Princeton High School Team #1                                |   |
| Madison High School  | Princeton High School Team #2                                |   |
| Marine Academy of Science and Technology                     | Sage Day At Somerset   |   |
| Marine Academy of Technology & Environmental Science Team #1 |  |   |

