

Want to start an Envirothon Team?



What?

The Envirothon program is a hands-on environmental science and natural resources competition for middle school and high school students. It is the largest high school environmental science contest in North America. Participation takes place at three levels: area, state and national.

Who?

The competition is open to public, charter, private, and home schools, as well as, FFA groups and other clubs. Teams must consist of 3 to 5 members (plus 2 alternates if desired) and an adult advisor.

How?

Teams will study and train prior to the competition and then be tested on their knowledge of 5 subject areas:

1. **Wildlife:** Wildlife covers habitat, identification, foods, diseases, and management.
2. **Aquatics:** Aquatics covers ecology of water, stream improvement, water quality, plants and animals living in or around water, pollution, wetlands, and conservation.
3. **Forestry:** Forestry covers tree identification, forest ecology, insects, diseases, parts of plants and forest measurements.
4. **Soils:** Soils covers classification, erosion, soil surveys, site suitability, current issues, profiles, soil characteristics, and conservation practices.
5. **Current Environmental Issues:** Current Environmental Issues cover any current or newsworthy environmental issue.

Why?

Envirothon competitions provide the opportunity for students to earn thousands of dollars in scholarship money. Here are what local advisors think:

- “It gives students an opportunity to learn about natural things in our environment that we seldom stop to think about!” – Advisor
- “The Envirothon gives students a chance to experience and learn about things they may not have a chance to do in a normal classroom setting.” – Advisor
- “... a fun, hands-on, natural science academic event that engages and challenges students to think critically about the natural world and their role in it.” – Advisor

Sponsorship?

Many Districts sponsor teams from their respective counties by paying for registration fees at all or some levels. Districts can also assist your team with setting up special training sessions with local resource professionals in the five areas of study and provide resource information needed for each team to succeed.

Contact?

Interested groups should first contact your local Soil & Water Conservation District for participation at the local level Area Envirothon. Find your local contact here: www.ncagr.gov/SWC/findyourdistrict

Now what?

Now that you have decided to start an Envirothon team, here are some tips for success.

For complete information on the NC Envirothon, including links to Area competitions, please visit www.ncenvirothon.org

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL ENVIROTHON TEAM

(Adapted from Wake County Enloe High School Envirothon Team Advisors)

Recruiting Members

- At the beginning of the school year post flyers throughout the school about joining a team or your Envirothon program.
- Have other teachers help promote the Envirothon to their classes.
- Post advertisements with pictures from previous year events in your daily school news.
- Many team members are hand-picked by teachers in the first few weeks. These students are often discovered in science classes who have a personal interest.
- Allow others to join throughout the year or even the next year.
- Reality is...it takes a few years of building the program's reputation before participant numbers grow.
- Try to begin with roughly 5-8 students at the start of school.

Introductory Meeting

- Have an introductory meeting where you discuss what the Envirothon is and what your intent is as an advisor.
- Establish expectations and the time commitment required to be successful.
- Have students complete information sheets describing their prior-knowledge and subject interests.
- Establish a regular meeting time, either during elective periods or after school.

Assigning Specialty Subjects

- Many advisors assign students one or two subjects in which to specialize. That student is considered the 'subject expert'.
- After the introductory meeting, review the information sheets and try to balance how many students study each subject taking into consideration students' interest level, possible team divisions, and the students' prior knowledge.
- Ensure each student has all the required study materials for their subject area(s). You can print or download and place on a flash drive from the NC Envirothon website. Study materials are updated often so be sure you are accessing the newest versions. New study resources are generally made available online by September 30th.
- Supplemental study materials are also available or you can create your own.
- It is recommended students study all required materials in addition to their assigned subject area(s). Studying all resources will help the student and team as a whole.

Expectations

- Keys to success is from building the program to a level that in which multiple students are trying out for the team every year creating some inner school competition.
- No different than tryouts for a school sports team--if you have 30 students try out, some will rise up to make the varsity squad if that's their goal.
- Students can be placed into multiple teams based on:
 - Their attendance
 - Their presentation scores
 - Their test scores
 - Completion of study times
- All students should be given the opportunity to compete. However, if you are unable to send multiple teams to the local Area event, consider a school competition.

Student Presentations

- Have students give a 5-minute presentation on their specialty subject.
- Organize a schedule of sign-up dates for presentations.
- Depending on how often your students meet, schedule presentations regularly.
- Students should attend at least one of the presentation sessions on each subject area.
- Provide students with a rubric.
- Presentations motivate students to study their material and helps them improve their presentation skills for the State Oral Presentation.

Attendance and Communication

- Most school Envirothon programs are afterschool. Don't expect students to attend every meeting. Envirothon competes with many other activities. Be flexible.
- Students committed to the program will do well.
- It will require some record-keeping and much communication with the students.
- You will have to remind students about upcoming meetings and events.
- Some advisors keep records of attendance for the students, creating a sense of responsibility amongst team members when they miss meetings on a regular basis.

Study Times and Accountability

- It is recommended to require at-home study times from each student. Typically 30 minutes each week or more.
- It is suggested to have students email a short synopsis of what they learned during their study time.
- Some advisors keep a record of completed study times to encourage accountability.

Field Trips and Resources

- Schedule field trips after school throughout the year.
- Make the most of your local resources for study sessions: Soil and Water Conservation District, NC Forestry Service, NC Museum of Natural Science, Universities or Community Colleges. Ensure each study session has a minimum of 10 students attend to make it worth the Resource Professionals' time (especially on weekends).
- The concept is to make Envirothon fun, keep them excited and wanting to continue next year, and spread the program's value by word of mouth.
- Focus on hands-on study sessions, and topic-related community service projects.
- Encourage students to take pictures and share on social media to document their Envirothon experience.
- Take and share pictures in the school news to help promote and advertise the program.

The Test

- Have students take a comprehensive practice test at the end of January.
- Create a 100-question test from old Area, State, or NCF tests, identification questions, Wildlife in NC magazines, and current environmental issues.
- 20 questions per 5 subjects.
- This test can be used to determine team placement and will prepare them for the Area and State Envirothon.

Team Placement and Team Captains

- After test completion, compile all the information and begin to design teams. Consider test results, attendance, study synopsis and presentations.
- In February, teams should be organized prior to your Area Envirothon registration.
- Consider giving practice tests so teams can work together as a unit for the first time.
- Assign each team a Team Captain.
 - Captains are encouraged to listen to their subject experts, but can make the final call on a question when a dispute occurs.
 - Captains can arrange their teams own study sessions outside of school and monitor their team members' attendance and study habits.
 - Captains can assist you in communications and obtaining needed registration information.
 - Giving Captains responsibilities, helps encourage leadership skills.
- If you have a high number of teams and are limited to the number of teams you can send to your Area event, consider an inner school elimination round where the lowest scoring team becomes alternates for the remaining teams.

Oral Presentations (High School Only)

- Practice, practice, practice! Make up practice problem scenarios and have teams practice developing their solutions with a script for each team member.
- Prior OP scenarios with rubrics are listed on the NC Envirothon website that can be utilized for practice.
- Some local Soil & Water Conservation Districts will host a Mock OP where students can present before a real panel of volunteer judges. The judges give the teams constructive feedback – what they did well, and how they can improve both their technical science content and their public speaking skills.
- Practice, practice, practice! Public speaking is an important life skill!

Area and State Competitions

- Winners of the Area competitions dictates which teams advance to the State level.
- Each Area event is different. We encourage you to work with your local Soil & Water Conservation Districts to understand their Area competition.
- Study resources are the same at the Area and State levels.
- Competition rules may differ slightly from the Area to the State Envirothon.
- Use these events to encourage students, build team unity, and foster leadership skills.
- Celebrate all your students' hard work! Some local Soil & Water Conservation Districts have an awards banquet where teams are invited to attend.

Bottom Line: Lay out expectations EARLY—“We’re here to learn and take the competition seriously!” If you make it fun for students, then they will do the work for you.

~ Wake County Enloe High School Envirothon Team Advisors

For complete information on the NC Envirothon, including links to Area competitions, please visit www.ncenvirothon.org

