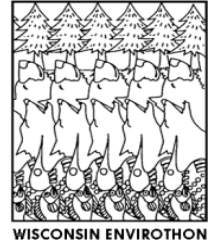


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High School and Middle School Students Compete in first Virtual 2021 Wisconsin Envirothon

*Winning High School Team to Represent Wisconsin at the NCF-Envirothon
Virtual Competition in July hosted by Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts*

MADISON – WI Land+Water’s Envirothon, sponsored by the Outdoor Heritage Education Center and many other Wisconsin organizations held its first virtual competition over a three-day period, April 14-16, 2021. Wisconsin Envirothon is Wisconsin’s ultimate middle and high school environmental science challenge where teams of four or five high school or middle school students participate in four hands-on, mostly outdoor field challenges designed by natural resources professionals and educators. The exams are based on four categories: aquatic ecology, forestry, soils/land use, and wildlife.

“Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Wisconsin Envirothon had to be cancelled. When it became clear that an in person Envirothon would be difficult for 2021, our Youth Education WI Envirothon subcommittee worked hard to put together their first virtual Envirothon.” said Tracy Arnold, Chair of the WI Land+Water Youth Education Committee. “We know how much schools across the state love participating in the WI Envirothon and with some schools virtual and some in-person we thought a virtual event would be the best way to engage students and also expose new students to the event who have never participated before.”

Schools from across the state spent two days, April 14-15 testing their natural resource knowledge on written exams in the four stations, Aquatic Ecology, Forestry, Soils and Land Use and Wildlife. On Friday, April 16 Envirothon teams both Middle and High Schools created their team presentation based on a current issue and presented their solutions on zoom to a room of judges made up of resource professionals. While students missed out on the outdoor hands-on experience they normally experience at an in-person event, students still had to identify aquatic invertebrates and invasive plants, identify tree species and wildlife pelts and answer questions about properties of soil on written online exams.

"I was really impressed with the Envirothon curriculum because it aligned well with what agriculture educators teach about every day in our classes. The team presentation challenged the kids and it was

exciting to see them perform in front of a team of renowned natural resources professionals in the state of Wisconsin. Said Miss Dei, Slinger FFA Advisor. "For our first time competing, we are very impressed and look forward to competing at nationals and putting together another team next year."

Finally, the students created a team presentation based on this year's current issue: *Water Resources Management: Local Control and Local Solutions*. They had a little over three weeks to prepare their team presentation. The Current Issue team presentation provides an opportunity to combine fundamental knowledge and reasoning ability to understand and articulate today's critical environmental concerns. Participating in Wisconsin Envirothon helps students develop knowledge and skills to either pursue careers in conservation or use their knowledge to preserve our natural resources in whatever civic and career choices that lie ahead.

"When our team first entered the Envirothon, I didn't expect us to be a top team contender," said Ben McMeeken, a Junior at Slinger High School. "We all had a passion for conservation and natural resources, but most of us were there to learn and test our knowledge of conservation. Winning the Wisconsin Envirothon made us realize as a group that we do know a lot about conservation and the environment, and we should spread out knowledge to other students as we are the future of conservation. Now we are off to the National Envirothon! Let's go represent Wisconsin well."

The overall winner for the High School category will represent Wisconsin at the National Conservation Foundation-virtual Envirothon taking place July 25-July 28, 2021 hosted by Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts Association of Resources Districts.

The following teams won first place in the following categories:

Aquatic Ecology: High School- Sun Prairie High School, FFA; **Middle School-** Aldo Leopold Community School

Forestry: High School- Marshfield High School, FFA; **Middle School-** Wildlands Middle School

Soils and Land Use: High School- Cochrane Fountain City High School FFA, /Sun Prairie High School, FFA; **Middle School-** Aldo Leopold Community School

Wildlife: High School- Slinger High School, FFA; **Middle School-** Aldo Leopold Community School

Team Presentations: High School- Vernon Area High School; **Middle School-** Wildlands Middle School

First Place FFA: High School- Slinger High School, FFA

Overall: High School- Slinger High School, FFA; **Middle School-** Aldo Leopold Community School

For a complete list of second and third place winners, please visit our website at:

<http://wisconsinlandwater.org/events/envirothon>

The Wisconsin Envirothon is a program of the Wisconsin Land+Water Conservation Association's Youth Education Committee and is made possible by the many generous volunteers made up of natural resource professionals and educators. The Wisconsin Envirothon also relies on the volunteer and financial support of many of our agency partners, county conservation departments, and organizations

and businesses dedicated to conservation. For a complete list of our financial supporters visit our website at: <http://wisconsinlandwater.org/events/envirothon>. For continued updates, follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/wienvirothon>.

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