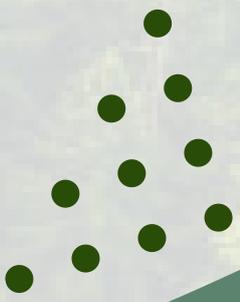


CONNECTICUT ENVIROTHON



2025 Annual Report

Roots and Resiliency:
Fostering Forest Stewardship
in a Canopy of Change



Mission

The mission of the Envirothon is to promote environmental awareness, knowledge, and active personal stewardship among high school students through educational workshops and team competition. The Connecticut Envirothon program began in 1992 as part of the North American Envirothon program. The 2024-2025 school year marked the 32nd consecutive year that the program has been offered to Connecticut high school students attending public, private, and agricultural/technical schools, clubs, and homeschool programs.



Advisors make a considerable difference in guiding teams towards competition day.

Steering Committee and Station Leaders

The Connecticut Envirothon Program is guided by a volunteer steering committee comprised of natural resource professionals from various federal, state, and local agencies, private environmental groups, and active and retired educators. Monthly committee meetings are held virtually to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from members' travel to meeting locations. The annual meeting is held in person as a picnic get-together, which gets the committee members to reflect and begin planning for the next competition season.

Some members of the Steering Committee are also Station Leaders for the core topics - Aquatics, Forestry, Soils, Wildlife, plus a rotating Current Issue. This year's Current Issue was *Roots and Resiliency: Fostering Forest Stewardship in a Canopy of Change*. Station leaders plan the curriculum and training workshops for each of the main subject areas. They also prepare and administer the station exams during the Field Day competition in May.

A significant reason for the success of the Connecticut Envirothon Program is due to the time and dedicated efforts of the following members of the 2024-2025 Connecticut Envirothon Steering Committee:

Paul Benjunas, Chair
Karen Griswold Nelson, Vice Chair
Pam Huntley, Treasurer
Sandy Weiss, Secretary
Ginny Patsun, Program Coordinator
Frank Cervo, Forestry Station Leader
Peter Picone, Wildlife Station Leader
Susan Quincy, Current Issue Leader
Kelsey Sudol, Aquatics Station Leader
Lynn Kochiss
Lisa Krall
Jean Laughman
Joan Nichols
Charlotte Pyle
Cynthia Rabinowitz
Denise Savageau
Joanna Shapiro
Alyssa Barroso
Sarah Smith

CT DEEP
Northwest Conservation District (Retired)
USDA Forest Service (Retired)
CT River Coastal Conservation District
Northcentral CT Conservation District
CT DEEP
CT DEEP
CT DEEP
Northwest CT Conservation District
Educator
USDA-NRCS (Retired)
Envirothon Advisor / Educator, UCONN
Private Forester
USDA-NRCS (Retired)
Northwest CT Conservation District
CT River Coastal Conservation District
North Central Conservation District
North Central Conservation District
Envirothon Advisor/Retired Educator



Annie Hageman played the National Anthem at the opening ceremony.

Treasurer's Financial Report

A proposed budget for 2025-2026 school year was developed and approved by the Steering Committee at the beginning of the academic year. Both the proposed budget and actual expenditures are included.

CONNECTICUT ENVIROTHON FISCAL YEAR SEPT 2024 TO AUG 2025		
	BEGINNING	\$42,110.01
	ENDING	\$30,020.72
	<u>PROJECTED 25</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
RECEIPTS		
Interest	\$50.00	\$49.72
Team Registration \$75 per team	\$1,875.00	\$2,100.00
Team Registration Late	\$0.00	\$0.00
Extra Team Materials	\$0.00	\$0.00
T-Shirt Sales	\$0.00	\$0.00
Misc. Payments	\$0.00	\$0.00
Council on Soil and Water Conservation	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00
Sponsors/Donations	\$22,955.00	\$600.00
TOTALS	\$44,880.00	\$22,749.72
	<u>BUDGETED 25</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
EXPENSES		
Supplies/Educational Materials	\$5,500.00	\$1,723.89
General Supplies (binders, paper, etc)	\$250.00	\$69.73
Soils	\$150.00	\$0.00
Aquatics	\$150.00	\$0.00
Forestry	\$150.00	\$0.00
Wildlife	\$150.00	\$0.00
Current Issue	\$150.00	\$0.00
Teacher Orientation	\$500.00	\$154.16
Innovation & Technology	\$4,000.00	\$1,500.00
T Shirts & other merchandizing	\$3,500.00	\$3,616.40
Outreach Materials (Brochure, Social Medi	\$500.00	\$0.00
Postage	\$200.00	\$59.72
Awards	\$1,500.00	\$1,200.00
National Dues	\$450.00	\$450.00
National Meeting Travel Expenses	\$2,400.00	\$4,819.65
Registration for National Event	\$2,300.00	\$2,700.00
Team Travel to National	\$8,000.00	\$8,277.92
Event	\$6,950.00	\$5,155.74
Lunch	\$5,100.00	\$4,800.00
Breakfast, snacks	\$500.00	\$355.74
Tables, chairs, tent, sound system	\$1,050.00	\$0.00
Site rental	\$250.00	\$0.00
Miscellaneous	\$50.00	\$0.00
Workshops	\$1,680.00	\$848.46
Soils	\$240.00	\$89.60
Aquatics	\$240.00	\$116.31
Forestry	\$240.00	\$0.00
Wildlife	\$240.00	\$479.22
Current Issue	\$240.00	\$163.33
Map Reading	\$240.00	\$0.00
Judge's Training	\$240.00	\$0.00
Program Assistant	\$10,000.00	\$4,862.70
Program Director	\$0.00	\$0.00
Web Site/Internet Service	\$1,100.00	\$936.67
Mileage	\$300.00	\$30.82
Instate Meetings	\$500.00	\$157.04
TOTALS	\$44,880.00	\$34,839.01

Study Materials

All essential curriculum materials are posted on the CT Envirothon website (www.ctenvirothon.org), with each station team maintaining and updating a materials list through the webmaster. Materials provided from the stations range from journal articles to fact sheets, from web-links to PowerPoint files, examples of previous exam questions, and other study guides.

Workshops

Each of the five Station Leaders organized and facilitated either remote, in-person or hybrid workshops throughout the school year leading up to the competition. The workshops are an integral part of the CT Envirothon, helping students become well-informed in the five topics through hands-on experiences and online tools. The Station Leaders and their assistants are professionals in their field working for various agencies, including the CT DEEP and the USDA-NRCS.

Aquatics Station

This year began with an in-person fall workshop at Chatfield Hollow State Park in Killingworth, CT, thanks to help from partner organizations, including the CT Conservation Districts, CT DEEP, CT River Conservancy, and the Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition. The workshop was co-hosted with the Forestry station and consisted of four stations that provided students with an opportunity for field-based learning. Students developed their skills in aquatics-related knowledge by learning about the complexity of balancing multiple stakeholder interests in watershed planning, as well as macroinvertebrate sampling and identification as bioindicators of surface water quality.

A second workshop was held in the winter at the Connecticut River Academy in East Hartford, CT, thanks to the help of partner organizations, including the CT Conservation Districts, CT DEEP, and Yale Urban Resources Initiative. The workshop was co-hosted with the Current Issues station and provided students with an opportunity for hands-on and in-class learning. The aquatics-related topics in this workshop included fish identification, agricultural best management practices, bacteria monitoring and water quality, as well as a practical competition from the 2024 exam.



Macroinvertebrate sampling at the Aquatics/Forestry Workshop.

In addition to in-person workshops, a video was asynchronously released on the CT Envirothon YouTube channel (all videos are on the [Aquatics Station YouTube playlist found here](#)). The video entitled “Non-Point Source Pollution Overview” by Grace Jenks,

2024 Outreach and Education Intern at Northwest Conservation District, was released in Fall 2024. The video presented an overview of Non-Point Source Pollution in Connecticut ([found here](#)). Several videos were recorded of the two workshops and will be released during the 2025-2026 school year. There are now 17 original videos on the Aquatics playlist, and the goal for next year is to add three more virtual presentations for a total of 20 videos. While in-person workshops will continue to be hosted, the virtual library is an essential resource for students.



Keying out macroinvertebrates at the Aquatics/Current Issue Workshop

The in-person competition included several hands-on components from partner organizations. The Peabody Museum of Natural History (Yale University) provided amphibian and fish specimens that students used for identification questions. Several questions also referred to a watershed tabletop simulator (Enviroscape) to explore non-point source pollution and watershed science. The Enviroscape was provided by the CT DEEP. The Lake Waramaug Task Force offered two pieces of lake monitoring equipment for the test. A study guide was again provided to better organize information for the students.



Watershed simulator used at the 2025 Competition.

After the competition, the Aquatics station leaders aided the 2025 winning team from Marvelwood School in their preparation for the National Competition through virtual training based on the National aquatics study guide. Co-station leader Kelsey Sudol also took the opportunity to support the winning team at the National Competition.

Based on participant feedback, the workshops and resources provided this year were well received. Next year, Aquatic station leaders will continue to build on previous materials and programs and strive to provide fun and rewarding learning experiences through workshops and online content.



Melissa Mostowy (l) and Kelsey Sudol (r), Aquatics Station co-leaders.

Forestry Station

Forestry started the year out by co-hosting a workshop with Aquatics at Chatfield Hollow State Park in Killingworth, CT. Forestry worked with 36 participants from schools across the state, covering topics such as tree measurements, forest health, and CT forest history. This year's annual competition was an exciting one for the Forestry Station. The rain was a challenge, but the Forestry Station team made it work. Students wore rain gear and headed out to the field to put their knowledge of forestry to the test.

Undeterred by the infusion of severe weather into the day's events, the students finished up the 40-question test. This year's top scorer was Northwestern Regional Team II.



Forestry exam in the rain on competition day.

Soils Station

The USDA-NRCS Connecticut's conservation planning and soils staff served as the leads for the Envirothon's Soils Station. Their ongoing goal is for soil workshops to be exciting, interactive experiences, enabling students and teachers to collaborate and learn about soils



The rain simulator used to demonstrate various erosion situations.

Amelia Magistrali, NRCS Student Intern
Becca Syme, and NRCS-Connecticut State Soil Scientist Jacob Isleib. NRCS-Connecticut Soil Conservationist Lexi Hovan and Soil Survey Office Leader Geraldine Vega graded the soil station exams. The soil station staff always enjoy seeing the students amped up for the competition, working together at the stations, and, of course, getting their hands dirty.

and landscapes. The soil station at the 2025 Envirothon competition featured a hand-dug soil pit in a glacial till deposit. Due to rain and wind, however, the station was forced to an outdoor sheltered area near the learning center. Trays of the pit soil profiles were collected for students to use for the soils exam. Students were asked to estimate soil textures, soil color, and identify soil horizons. They were also asked questions referencing a custom soil survey report and general soils knowledge related to this year's current issue. Proctoring the soil pit were UConn Extension Soil Health Specialist



The soil pit has been dug and is ready for the workshop.



Working together at the competition at the Soils station.



Competition testing at the Soils station.

Wildlife Station

CT DEEP Wildlife Biologist Peter Picone led the Wildlife Station. This year's wildlife training for student teams took place at the CT DEEP's Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area in Burlington, CT on March 15, 2025. There were five concurrent sessions available for the students to choose from. The following educational talks were available for students to attend:

- *Wildlife/Habitat/Limiting Factors: Food, Water, Shelter, and Arrangement: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How?* by Peter Picone, CT DEEP Wildlife Biologist with live birds of prey provided by Christine and Betsy Peyreigne of Christine's Critters
- *Collecting Biological Data from Bobcats: techniques in gathering information including necropsy/food habits/reproductive condition/morphology* by CT DEEP Furbearer Program Biologists and Assistants
- *CT Birds of Prey/Rehab and Falconry* by Christine and Betsy Peyreigne of Christine's Critters
- *Protecting Wildlife and Wildlife Laws and Regulations* by CT DEEP Environmental Conservation Police Officers
- *CT Furbearers: Identifying Pelts* by Art Potvin and Peggy Lereau, CT DEEP Master Wildlife Conservationists
- *Looking at Wildlife Skulls* by Ed Smith, Educator
- *Wildlife Myths* by Peter Picone, CT DEEP Wildlife Biologist, Paul Benjunas and Tyler Mahard, CT DEEP Public Awareness Program Staff

Students also took a 30-question wildlife quiz that required them to hike through conservation education areas and answer practical questions on various exhibits. Access to a variety of wildlife-related talks was available online on the CT Envirothon's YouTube channel at

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiJB5g6YGbmKe7c8WKdqUdg/playlists>.

Refreshments for the wildlife workshop were made possible by a donation from the Friends of Sessions Woods.



Wildlife winning team, Housatonic Valley Agriscience - Oaks.

At the May 2025 competition, students were administered a wildlife test consisting of 50 questions. The test included a practical component requiring students to identify life-size taxidermy mounts of animals or the skin or skull of an animal. Teams were also asked to identify pictures of animals, sketches or photos of habitat types, and to match an animal to its habitat requirements. Other

sections of the test required teams to identify parts of an animal or act as a “detective” to determine what disturbance an animal caused by piecing together the evidence presented.

Current Issue and Oral Presentations

This year, the Current Issue, *Roots and Resiliency: Fostering Forest Stewardship in a Canopy of Change*, was largely focused on forests and their role in resilience planning. Elizabeth Bernard, Outreach Forester with the CT DEEP, was recruited to serve as advisor in this area. Her experience in forestry, climate, and planning provided insight into scenario development and what resources and speakers to provide to assist teams in their challenges.



Shalyn Zappula, CT DEEP, presenting at the Current Issue Workshop

The resource list relied heavily on the CT Forestry Management Plan and partner resources associated with it. Teams were provided links to websites, videos, and management guidance initiatives from a variety of government and NGO organizations. Building an understanding of the impacts forest management has on watershed planning and land use was the core of the year’s training.

Emily Picard also assisted with the training outline and delivery process, offering materials from 4H to help students focus on presentation skills. Building on last year’s efforts, Emily provided a webinar in addition to a face-to-face workshop presentation. Both formats were aimed at developing presentation skills and this year’s student presentations at the competition showed the benefit of this training. Discussions on maintaining and improving presentation training will continue next year.

Emily Picard also assisted with the training outline and delivery process, offering materials from 4H to help students focus on presentation skills. Building

The number of webinars this year was reduced to allow students to focus on the resources provided. All webinars were recorded and presented online for student access. The inclusion of a stakeholder webinar was significant in that it focused on this year’s Current Issue task, to make land use decisions and understand how others view the importance and use of land. The scenario included several stakeholders and provided students with professionals who can listen and decide on many land use issues.



Current issue winning team, Nonnewaug High School.

Hearing from a variety of viewpoints is necessary to see how compromises and hard decisions are made. The maps and information about the location were compiled by Jane Seymour, Wildlife Division, CT DEEP, and Envirothon Current Issue member.

The task had students design and defend a management plan for 400 acres of forested land. They were given a packet of information about the site along with a series of stakeholder letters from the community and local and statewide organizations advising the management planners. Student plans presented at the competition included a variety of ideas and reflected consideration of the community's input. Presentations were a good reflection of ideas and how students take this challenge seriously.

Connecticut Envirothon Field Day Event

The 2025 competition was held on May 22nd at the Indian Rock Nature Preserve in Bristol, CT. Although it rained for much of the day, the Station Leaders found ways to adjust their activities to keep the students dry. Lunch was provided by The Country Butcher from Tolland, CT. Scrumptious soup, salad, and sandwiches were served.

Twenty-eight teams, including four Wildcard teams, took part in the competition. Justin Davis, Chief of the Bureau of Natural Resources and Acting Deputy Commissioner of Environmental Conservation at the CT DEEP, also attended and delivered a speech about the importance of teaching natural resources at this level to prepare students to become future environmental leaders.



First Place in the competition was awarded to the Marvelwood Martens of Marvelwood School, Second Place to the Housatonic Valley Agriscience - Oaks, and Third Place to Xavier High School. Pyrographic medals were awarded to the top ten teams, and all participants received certificates of participation. Engraved plaques were awarded to the top three teams and to the teams that achieved the highest scores on each station.

*Pyrographic award for the Wildlife station winner.
Artwork by Amelia Maurer, Wild Pyrography.*

Career Fair

The following organizations and businesses set up booths and exposed students to potential careers in different environmental fields. Thank you for your participation!

American Society of Landscape Architecture
CT Agricultural Experiment Station
CT DEEP Boating
CT DEEP ENCON
CT DEEP Water
CT Forest Producers Association, Tim Pro

CT Land Conservation Council
CT State Parks
Tighe & Bond Studio - Halvorson
Two Coyotes
UCONN 4-H
UConn College of Agriculture, Health,
and Natural Resources



Hustle and bustle at the Career Fair during Competition day.

The Neil Picone Memorial Wildlife Award

The Neil Picone Memorial Wildlife Award is given each year to the team that wins the Wildlife competition. This year's award was presented to Housatonic Valley Agriscience - Oaks.

Neil Picone, son of long-time Envirothon steering committee member and CT DEEP Wildlife Biologist Peter Picone, was an avid outdoorsman and enjoyed creating and turning Connecticut-grown hardwood products on a wood lathe. The award is a hand-carved Bald Eagle, created by a local woodcarver.



The Picone family standing with this year's award carving.

National Envirothon Competition

This year, the International Envirothon event, hosted by the National Conservation Foundation (NCF), was held in Alberta, Canada. The event was held July 20-26 at Mount Royal University in Calgary. Connecticut's Champion team, from Marvelwood School in Kent, travelled north to compete against champions from other states, Canadian Provinces, and China.



Connecticut Champions at their registration photo on the first day of the event in Alberta.

The team worked hard learning content matter from local and regional Canadian experts. After being tested on their knowledge, all teams and their advisors travelled to Banff National Park and toured Sunshine Meadows. The field trip was an amazing day of adventure and decompression that ended with a large barbecue within sight of the Rocky Mountains.

Following the field trip, it was back to business for Team Connecticut. The team met with forestry professionals and learned about forest management, possible invasive pests, and secondary fiber products. Next, they worked on a presentation in a closed room with no

internet for 6 hours.

Fueled with sugary snacks, the team created slides and practiced their script for presenting to judges the next day. At the end of 6 hours, they turned in their materials and had dinner. On the last day, the team delivered their presentation and relaxed while waiting for the awards ceremony later that evening.

When all scores were tallied, Connecticut finished 41 of 50 teams. The top three teams were, in order, Massachusetts, Maryland, and New York. At the event's conclusion, there was a dance party, where all teams celebrated another exciting and successful NCF Envirothon competition. On to Mississippi in 2026!



Envirothon participants at Banff National Park Sunshine Meadows.

Thank you for your support!

We thank the following organizations and individuals who contributed cash, in-kind, or material donations to the Connecticut Envirothon program:

Cinder and Salt
Connecticut River Conservancy
Connecticut Council on Soil and Water Conservation
Connecticut Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts
Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District
Eastern Conservation District
Friends of Sessions Woods, Inc.
North Central Conservation District
Northwest Conservation District
Southwest Conservation District
Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection
Lake Waramaug Task Force
Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition
Peabody Museum of Natural History
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Society of Soil Scientists of Southern New England
UCONN Cooperative Extension System
USDA Forest Service
The Country Butcher
Tolland County Agricultural Center
Wild Pyrography



2025

www.ctenvirothon.org