

The Conroe Academy of Science and Technology Wins at 2007 Texas Envirothon

The Texas Envirothon was held April 21 through 23, 2007 at Sheldon Lake State Park and Environmental Learning Center in Houston, Texas. Envirothon is an academic, extra-curricular environmental and natural resource education program and competition designed for high school students. Teams of five students work together to answer questions focusing on five areas of study: aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and the current environmental issue, which was alternative/renewable energy. In addition to the field experience, students also participate in an oral component focusing on a real-world environmental problem. Thirteen schools for a total of 19 teams participated in the competition. Those included were: Berkner High School (Richardson); Clear Lake High School (Clear Lake); Conroe Academy of Science and Technology (Conroe - Teams A & B); John Cooper High School (The Woodlands - Teams A & B); Dobie High School (Pasadena); Grand Prairie High School (Grand Prairie); Klein Collins High School (Spring); Monarch School (Houston); Montgomery High School (Montgomery - Teams A & B); R. L. Paschal High School (Ft. Worth); Rio Hondo High School (Rio Hondo - Teams A & B); John Tyler High School (Tyler - Teams A & B); and Westside High School (Houston - Teams A & B). The overall winner of the 2007 Texas Envirothon was Conroe Academy of Science and Technology Team A. Conroe Academy of Science and Technology Team B was second place. The John Cooper Team A and Westside Team A were third place winners. In addition to the overall winners, awards were given to the top scoring teams on the field/written exam by topic and for the top team in the oral presentations during a ceremony held at the San Jacinto College North Campus on Monday afternoon. The winners were John Cooper-Team A in Aquatics, Forestry, and Current Issue; Westside High School Team A in Soils; Klein Collins High School in Wildlife, and Conroe Academy of Science and Technology Team A in the Oral Presentation.

The fun began on Saturday afternoon with optional student training workshops presented by a variety of professionals. Presenters included Michelle Holyfield and Alex Stanton from Eastman Chemical Company, Diana Foss from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Steven Cooke and Michael Easley from the Texas Forest Service, Dennis Brezina from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Andy Sipocz from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. During these presentations, students received training in aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and oral presentation skills. The competition officially began on Sunday afternoon at the Sheldon Lake State Park and Environmental Learning Center. There were 95 students as well as 24 team advisors participating in the field-testing. Questions on the field test ranged from identifying birdcalls and tree measurements to describing soil textures and discussing the benefits of wetlands. Over 80 volunteers assisted with a variety of jobs including monitoring the field stations, leading students to each station, grading the field tests, serving as judges for the oral presentations, etc.

To help students prepare for Sunday evening's challenge, which was to develop a proposal addressing alternative/renewable energy in Texas, several guest presentations were held on Sunday morning.

Those presenting were Terry Cantorna with Shell Renewables, Mike Ewert with the Houston Renewable Energy Group, Mark Robinson with Momentum Bay Associates, and Henry Durrwachter with TXU. Following the field test on Sunday, the students were then sequestered for three hours to work on their presentations. The presentations were delivered to a panel of five judges on Monday morning.

Conroe Academy of Science and Technology - Team A will represent Texas at the Canon Envirothon competition to be held at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, NY, July 29 - August 3, 2007.

Sponsors of the 2007 Texas Envirothon included Eastman Chemical Company; University of Houston-Clear Lake, Environmental Institute of Houston; Sheldon Lake State Park and Environmental Learning Center; Canon USA; Harris County Soil and Water Conservation District; Montgomery

County Soil and Water Conservation District; Sandhill Soil and Water Conservation District; Hale County Soil and Water Conservation District; Texas Association of Environmental Professionals; Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts; Texas Association for Environmental Education; Shell Oil Company - Texas Regional Collaboratives; Sam Houston Resource Conservation and Development; Lyondell Chemical Company; Blue Bell Creameries; BP America; and Richardson Environmental Action League.

For more information about the Texas State Envirothon, contact Wendy Reistle, Environmental Institute of Houston/UHCL, at (281) 283-3045 or visit www.texasenvirothon.org.