

## **Project: Envirothon Collaboration**

**Project Leader: Will Snyder**

### **Project Overview**

The goal of this collaboration is to help young people to grow into caring, capable, scientifically literate, well-informed, engaged citizens who are prepared to contribute to their communities in the 21st century. The collaboration develops well-designed challenges for youth teams and provides adult coaches with background information and community connections that will help them be effective in their work with youth on community issues.

Mass Envirothon's collaboration with the UMass College of Natural Sciences also aims to encourage high school age young people to consider and explore routes to further experience and education that will allow them to participate responsibly and effectively in environmental protection and natural resource conservation, in their communities and in their careers.

Through the collaboration, UMass facilitates access to applied science and youth development expertise across the Commonwealth as well as on the UMass campus. The Mass Envirothon network includes local officials and citizens serving on municipal boards, scientists and policy staff in state environmental agencies, and environmental advocates in nongovernmental organizations, all of whom are interested in helping to prepare youth who will be active citizens in Massachusetts communities in decades to come.

A primary focus of the program is work with the school teachers and youth leaders who guide the high school age youth in their community-based learning. With our help, these teachers can offer a multiplier effect in reaching youth, and they may also choose to serve as volunteers on local boards.

### **Activity Summary 2018**

- Fall Envirothon Team Workshop at UMass (1)
- Judges Orientation for Envirothon Current Issue (1)
- Mass Envirothon Spring Workshop (1)
- Mass Envirothon Winter Workshop(1)
- Massachusetts Envirothon Community Awards Information for Teams (1)
- Massachusetts Envirothon Current Issue Questions & Resources for Teams (1)
- Massachusetts Envirothon Final Competition (1)

### ***Total Educational contacts***

	Youth Contacts	Adult Contacts
In Person	535	2326
Indirect Contacts (Print, Web, etc...)		

### **Narrative Summary and Impact**

In 2017-18, UMass Extension continued to provide leadership to the Massachusetts Envirothon Current Issue curriculum, but transitioned from overall program leadership.

As measured by community award participation, current issue competition results, and coach and youth survey responses, the program produced strong outcomes in natural resource knowledge and environmental values, as well as outcomes in teamwork, presentation skills, and community research. Extension contributed significantly to this multi-partner program, helping it to offer a rich, positive youth development experience in natural resource management and community environmental affairs.

The kick-off event for the Envirothon year, a full day, multi-session workshop, was again hosted by UMass Extension and the College of Natural Sciences and held on the UMass Amherst campus. More than 200 youth and high school educators had a chance to learn the basics of the Envirothon soil, water, wildlife, and forest curriculum, and to be introduced to many facets of the current issue, Partnering with Nature in Watersheds. The new School of Earth & Sustainability and its academic departments provided strong support for this effort. The day's agenda is attached.

Mass Envirothon's program participation continues to represent significant geographic diversity, including rural, exurban, suburban, and urban teams from across Massachusetts. At the same time, Massachusetts' racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity is not as well represented as it might be. Holding the first and most important workshop of the year on the campus of the state's flagship public university sends an important message to our teams that higher education is within their reach.

While the partnership of Massachusetts agencies and organizations that support Envirothon is strong, and public interest appears high, the tide in public education in general does not favor this kind of youth-led, community-based learning, or environmental topics. Envirothon program participation numbers are declining. The Envirothon program will need not only to enhance its recruiting efforts but ensure that its offerings are more visible, accessible, and relevant to youth and their advisors.

### **Collaborating Organizations**

- **Massachusetts Envirothon Committee**
- **Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts**
- **Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation**
- **Massachusetts Department of Environmental Affairs**

- **Mass Department of Environmental Protection**
- **Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs**
- **Natural Resources Conservation Service – USDA**
- **National Grid**
- **Worcester County Conservation District**
- **MassWildlife**
- **USDA-NRCS**