

The John Cooper School Wins at 2008 Texas State Envirothon

The Texas State Envirothon was held April 12 through 14, 2008 at Brookhaven College in Farmers Branch, Dallas, 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 recreational impacts on natural resources. In addition to the field experience, students also participate in an oral component focusing on a real-world environmental problem. Eleven schools for a total of 18 teams participated in the competition. Those included were: Berkner High School (Richardson); Clear Lake High School (Clear Lake); College Park Academy of Science and Technology (The Woodlands – Teams A & B); John Cooper High School (The Woodlands – Teams A & B); Klein Collins High School (Spring); Monarch School (Houston – Teams A & B); Montgomery High School (Montgomery – Teams A & B); Richardson High School (Richardson); 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 2008 Texas Envirothon was The John Cooper School, Team A. Students on the winning team were: Alex Valderrama, Varsha Reddy, Andrew Ghazi, Kevin Bennett, and Ranjeet Paul. College Park Academy of Science and Technology Team B was second place, while, College Park Academy of Science and Technology Team A took third place.

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 Brookhaven College on Monday afternoon. The winners were John Cooper-Team A in Aquatics, and Forestry; Rio Hondo – Team A in Soils; Clear Lake High School in Wildlife, and College Park Academy of Science and Technology – Team B 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, Brett Johnson from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Daniel Duncum from the Texas Forest Service, Nathan Haile from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Lisa Cole from the Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area. During these presentations students received training in aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and oral presentation skills. The competition officially began on Sunday afternoon at Brookhaven College. There were 90 students as well as 20 team advisors participating in the field testing. Questions on the field test ranged from identifying bird nesting sites and tree measurements to describing soil textures and discussing the benefits of wetlands. Over 50 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 recreational impacts on natural resources in Texas, a guest presentation was held on Sunday morning. Dr. Gerard Kyle, associate professor in Recreation, Park, and Tourism Sciences at Texas A & M presented on the current issue, which was recreational impacts on natural resources. Following the field testing 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.

The John Cooper School - Team A will represent Texas at the Canon Envirothon competition to be held in Flagstaff, Arizona on July 28 – August 3, 2008.

Sponsors of the 2008 Texas Envirothon included: Eastman Chemical Company; Bell Helicopter, University of Houston-Clear Lake, Environmental Institute of Houston; Brookhaven College; Canon USA; Gulf Coast Waste Disposal Authority, Harris County Soil and Water Conservation District; Montgomery 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; Blue Bell Ice Creameries; 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.