



Ontario High School Students Place Second in North American Environmental Competition



(Toronto, ON) August 2, 2011 – From July 24th – 29th, high school students from 45 states, 8 provinces and 1 territory gathered in Sackville, New Brunswick to compete in the Canon (North American) Envirothon competition, including a five member team from West Hill Secondary School in Owen Sound which represented Ontario. All week long the teams were outside learning about the different elements of an ecosystem including forestry, aquatics, soils, wildlife, and an appropriate current issue of New Brunswick, estuaries. The students put their teamwork skills to the test by working together to compete in 5 field tests (in which they took top place in forestry and wildlife) as well as creating a 20 minute presentation. Their hard work and studying paid off when it was announced that they placed second at the closing ceremonies of the North American competition, receiving \$4000 scholarships each.

“This is an historic showing of Canadian teams in the 24 year history of the Canon (North American) Envirothon, with Manitoba placing first, Ontario second and the host team New Brunswick placing fourth. I am thrilled with this achievement of the team having placed 1st in the Forestry and Wildlife Stations and 2nd overall out of 54 teams. Our students from West Hill Secondary School in Owen Sound were outstanding ambassadors of the Province of Ontario and we sincerely thank the Ontario Forestry Association and all of our local sponsors and supporters. We also thank Canon Envirothon and the New Brunswick hosting committee, Mount Allison University and the Town of Sackville, New Brunswick for hosting an exceptional competition and warmly welcoming us,” says Carl Raynard, the Team Ontario Advisor.

“The issue of human impact upon the environment is only getting bigger, and being a part of Envirothon has provided me, and a lot of others like me, with the tools needed for dealing with environmental problems in the future. The experience as a whole has been quite unique, allowing me to meet people my own age, not only from all over Ontario, but from all over North America. Through Envirothon, I've learned things that I doubt I would've picked up otherwise; from the steps needed to rehabilitate a damaged wetland ecosystem, to how to differentiate between a white birch and a yellow birch, using only sense of smell,” says Erik Wagenaar, one of the students on the Ontario team.

The unique team competition is part of a broader environmental education program encouraging students to get outdoors and experience nature first hand in a fun and informative environment. Each year the high school teams in Ontario first compete in over 20 regional competitions in early spring, then advance to the provincial competition held in early May. The provincial winners move on to the North American competition held each July in a host province, state or territory.

Ontario has been holding Envirothon competitions since 1994; since then the program has grown to reach over 10,000 Ontario students each year with opportunities to learn about the environment. Envirothon gets students outdoors, to experience nature first hand and hands on! Envirothon is a unique team competition that rewards students for learning about the natural world around them and uses field testing to develop critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork and communication skills.

Ontario Envirothon is a program of the Ontario Forestry Association (OFA), a non-profit, registered charity dedicated to raising awareness and understanding of Ontario's forests, and to developing stewardship of forest ecosystems. Visit www.ontarioenvirothon.ca for more information.

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