



# NORTH DAKOTA WATER EDUCATION PROGRAM SUPPORTS ANNUAL STATE ENVIROTHON

Throughout the year, the North Dakota Water Education Program partners with various organizations, agencies, and constituents to provide a variety of educational opportunities that showcase and promote North Dakota's natural and water resources. The North Dakota State Envirothon is a unique annual event in which Water Education Program staff help organize, facilitate, and administer. The Envirothon is a problem-solving competition for high school students that emphasizes the importance of our natural resources.

In May 2021, the 21st Annual North Dakota State Envirothon event was held virtually with over 70 students from across the state participating in the competition. Teams consisted of five members in grades 9-12, affiliated with a school, organization, or academic club in North Dakota. Academic teams prepare, train, and study with an advisor throughout the school year in order to participate in this yearly state-wide event.

In addition to local contests, an international environmental and natural resources problem solving competition is also held each spring with over 25,000 high school students participating from across the United States, Canada, and China.

"These beneficial Envirothon competitions aim to help equip students with water resource management knowledge and ecology principles that can be applied in everyday life and towards evolving environmental issues," noted Tina Harding, North Dakota Water Education Program Manager. "These events also encourage leadership, creativity, exploration, and hands-on education."

During the North Dakota Envirothon, students participated in various activities including an oral presentation; and a field test involving aquatics, soil, wildlife, forestry, and prairie elements. In addition, a special topic project developed by the Department

The North Dakota Water Education Program exists to enhance public awareness and strengthen knowledge regarding water resources. Programs and informational materials are developed and distributed to generate further understanding of water science, conservation, and best management practices, and to demonstrate how water interacts with humans and the natural environment.

of Water Resources (DWR) and the North Dakota Water Education Program, was part of the event that required students to demonstrate research to a panel of judges.

Several staff members with the Regulatory and Water Appropriation Divisions at the Department of Water Resources (DWR) volunteered as members on the judge's panel and also provided various presentations throughout the competition. Students learned about drought impacts on water resources and the importance of hydrology. Staff also provided an educational presentation regarding geomorphology. This is the study of landforms related to earth surface processes formed by air, water, and ice, and how they influence the landscape. The influential



During the statewide competition, students participated in a hydrology-related field test.



The Bismarck High School "Water Buffalos" earned 1st place overall at the 2021 North Dakota State Envirothon.

processes can include floodplain, glacial, ground water, storm, and various other climate associated factors.

A real life-water scenario was also developed by DWR staff and the North Dakota Water Education Program for the special topic portion of this year's Envirothon. Students were mentored and instructed on how to perform specific duties and responsibilities of a Hydrologist by using water-resource data and water appropriation statues represented in North Dakota's Century Code. Students were asked to correctly prepare authorization of a predetermined permit request for the State Engineer. Overall scores from the entire event were tallied in order to determine the winners of the competition.

The Bismarck High School "Water Buffalos," coached by Valerie Smallbeck, earned this year's first-place accolades at the North Dakota State Envirothon. Team members included Brooke Bondley, Jake Havelka, Makai Ogoshi, Micah Penn, and Mackenzie Swenson. In July, the BHS "Water Buffalos" proudly represented North Dakota at the National Conservation Foundation Envirothon Competition hosted virtually from Nebraska.

Additional information regarding the North Dakota Water Education Program is located on the Department of Water Resources website at [www.dwr.nd.gov](http://www.dwr.nd.gov).