IOWA ENVIROTHON

2026-2027 Advisor/Coach's Handbook

2027 Current Environmental Issue:

Soil Health Management: Agricultural Principles and Stewardship

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IOWA ENVIROTHON CONTACT INFORMATION

Regan Davis, Program Coordinator

2015 Grand Ave, Box #15, Ste. LL2

Des Moines, Iowa 50312

Phone: (515) 289-8300

Email: regan@cdiowa.org

Website: https://cdiowa.org/iowa-envirothon/

CONSERVATION DISTRICTS OF IOWA

With support from ICEC IOWA CONSERVATION EDUCATION COALITION

OVERVIEW

Welcome to the Iowa Envirothon's Coach Handbook! The Iowa Envirothon is proudly presented and organized by the Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI). The purpose of this handbook is to introduce coaches to the Iowa Envirothon competition. It is intended to provide information to help plan, guide, and organize student teams for this event.

What is Envirothon?

The National Conservation Foundation (NCF) Envirothon is an environmental and natural resource conservation problem-solving, team-building, and leadership experience and competition for 9th – 12th grade students around the globe. The NCF-Envirothon is North America's largest environmental competition for high school students. The program began in Pennsylvania in 1979, and since then, hundreds of thousands of students have participated in Envirothon across the United States, China, Canada, Singapore, and now the Virgin Islands.

Iowa hosted its first Envirothon competition in the 1995 -1996 school year and continues to challenge students statewide to hone critical thinking skills and create inventive solutions to the complex local natural resource issues facing Iowans today. Through regional testing and a state competition, students exhibit their knowledge in these four areas: **forestry and prairies, aquatic ecology, wildlife, and soil and land use**. Teams qualifying for the state competition also prepare an oral presentation and take an additional exam on the current year's issue topic. The Iowa Envirothon is a statewide program developed in conjunction with NCF-Envirothon policies, and the top team in the state represents Iowa at the international competition.

To participate in the Iowa Envirothon, teams must consist of five members. As this is a high school competition, team members must be enrolled in grades 9-12 during the school year preceding the international NFC Envirothon competition. To learn more about the complete Iowa Envirothon rules and regulations, visit the Conservation Districts of Iowa website.

Starting in 2023, the Iowa Conservation Education Coalition (ICEC) has partnered with CDI to promote this program and provide an opportunity for qualifying schools that are new to the Iowa Envirothon:

- **ICEC will support schools with an urban and/or diverse population OR that have a need, with 55% or greater of the student population eligible for free/reduced lunch,**

that are new to Envirothon since 2024. These new participants are eligible to receive a free environmental science and conservation equipment kit.

- ICEC has a limited number of environmental science and conservation equipment "kits" used in the hands-on portion of the state competition available to first-time schools/teams! ICEC and CDI are focused on recruiting additional teams to this competition.
- To be eligible, schools (advisors/teachers) must register their team(s) and pay the $80 registration fee to the Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI).

What are the steps to receive the environmental and conservation equipment:

- Look for the 2027 Iowa Envirothon Registration form to go live!
- Register your teams before the deadline.
- Pay the per-team $80 registration fee to CDI.
- Complete the online regional test in the allotted time frame.

Why Get Involved?

The Iowa Envirothon encourages students to integrate and apply knowledge and skills from biology, chemistry, earth science, botany, zoology, and other science disciplines, while stimulating, reinforcing, and enhancing students' interest in the environment, related careers, and Iowa's natural resources. Of course, there are also incentives like travel, scholarships, prizes, and prestige!

Goals of the Iowa Envirothon

1. Increase students' knowledge and awareness of the interrelationship of our natural resources.
2. Promote environmental awareness and stewardship.
3. Develop students' critical thinking, cooperative problem-solving, and decision-making skills.
4. Provide awareness of and access to resource organizations that offer assistance with environmental issues.

Program Partners

We would like to thank the following agencies and organizations for their operational support and test development:

STRUCTURE OF THE IOWA ENVIROTHON

2027 Event Timeline

Team Registration Closes – **February 26, 2027**

Virtual Regional Testing – **March 8-26, 2027**

State Envirothon Competition – **April 26, 2027, at Jester Park Nature Center, Granger, Iowa**

2027 NCF-Envirothon – **July 25-31, 2027, at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, MD.**

Testing Format

The Iowa Envirothon consists of two competitions: a virtual regional competition and an in-person state competition. Students and coaches can anticipate a testing format for the regional and state competitions that will include the following:

- Terms & Definitions
- Calculations
- Matching
- Identification
- Multiple Choice
- Fill in the Blank
- Sampling and Testing (State Competition Only)

Regional Competition

The regional competition is conducted online and will include a test in each of four areas: forestry and prairies, aquatic ecology, wildlife, and soil and land use. Each test will include 25 questions, each worth one point. The total potential top score for each team would be 100 points (25 points per area). The top 15 teams from the regional competition will be eligible to compete at the State level. Each school or club may register and enter as many teams as they want in the regional competition, but only the top two teams from each school or club will be eligible to compete in the state competition. Each student will be allowed to compete on only one team.

To access these tests, you must assign a proctor to supervise the teams while they take the tests. The proctor must be a faculty member at the team's school. The proctor ***cannot*** be the team advisor/coach. The proctor will receive an email for each test containing a link to the online test and a password required for access. **The proctor must remain with the team until testing is completed.**

State Competition

The state competition will be held at the Jester Park Nature Center near Granger, Iowa, and will include a test in each of five areas: forestry and prairies, aquatic ecology, wildlife, soil and land use, and a current environmental topic. Each test will be worth 75 points and will include approximately 25 questions. Teams will also give an oral presentation worth 150 points based on a scenario related to the current environmental topic, the same as the international competition. During the oral presentation, teams will analyze the given scenario and develop an action plan to address key issues. The maximum possible score for each team is 450 points.

The scenario for the oral presentation, along with additional resources to help prepare for the state competition, will be provided to qualifying teams at least two weeks before the competition.

NCF-Envirothon Annual International Competition

The top team in the State of Iowa will receive an expense-paid trip to attend the NCF-Envirothon annual international competition. During the international NCF-Envirothon competition, teams from around the country will explore the area's landscapes, engage in conservation issues, and dive into a learning experience curated around that year's current issue. Beyond the competition, teams will have fun throughout the week with team-building activities, ceremonies, and social events. For more information about the international Envirothon competition, please visit the NCF-Envirothon website at https://envirothon.org/.

Iowa Envirothon study guides are available on the Conservation Districts of Iowa website:
https://cdiowa.org/iowa-envirothon/resources/

PREPARING FOR THE EVENT

Team Preparation

While this program culminates in a competition, it is first and foremost an educational program designed to increase knowledge and awareness of our natural environment. Students should put as much time and effort into preparation as they would for any competitive event, such as football or band, in which they hope to be state champions. With the opportunity to win an expense-paid trip for five students and two chaperones to represent Iowa in the week-long international competition, significant effort is expected. The NCF-Envirothon annual international competition is sponsored by the National Conservation Foundation.

Preparation should be ongoing throughout the school year. While knowledge of basic ecological concepts is essential, equally important is the exploration of sampling and testing procedures and techniques used in water quality analysis, soil evaluation, wildlife management, and forestry. Familiarity with identification guides for land and animal species is helpful. It is recognized that few schools have the equipment and expertise needed to study all these topics, but all schools have a wealth of information available from local county conservation boards, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and local experts on environmental issues.

Teamwork should also be emphasized. Learning to work together to explore new topics is important. While independent study is encouraged, students should meet regularly to discuss ideas and share different viewpoints. In the field of natural resource management, few issues are black-and-white. Consideration of many perspectives should be encouraged to develop solutions that are environmentally, socially, and economically viable. Some teams prefer to have students specialize in specific areas of the competition, while others prefer that all team members have a solid background in all the competitive categories.

Most importantly, this program should be fun! Field trips, speakers, demonstrations, and study should focus on increasing the interest of students in the natural environment. Certainly, winning the Regional and State competitions may be an important goal for some teams, but creating a desire to learn more about environmental issues and increasing students' awareness of their natural environment is paramount to the Iowa Envirothon's mission.

While some coaches use this program as part of their classroom curriculum, additional effort may be required to explore all topics. Because of the program's highly competitive

nature, some material may be beyond the level typically taught in high school, especially for students in 9th and 10th grade.

Coach's Responsibilities

As a coach for an Iowa Envirothon team, you are responsible for organizing, motivating, and helping your students study the four areas (forestry and prairies, aquatic ecology, wildlife, and soil and land use) and, if qualified, the current issue for the state competition. The coach is the backbone of their Envirothon team and should familiarize themselves with this guide and the rules and regulations.

Throughout the year, the coach guides the team's preparation for the competition. It is very important that coaches teach team skills and instill a strong environmental ethic in the team members. As a coach, you play an important role in the team's success and should be congratulated for investing in the team's growth by leveraging your knowledge and hands-on experience.

Thank you for considering the Iowa Envirothon! Please reach out with any comments, questions, or concerns.

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