



West Valley Supports Local Environmental Competition for Students



Students work on an exam at the aquatics station at this year's Cattaraugus County Envirothon. Nine teams from various schools competed in the environmental competition that tested their knowledge of aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife and a special current issue.

WEST VALLEY, N.Y. – With support from EM's [West Valley Demonstration Project \(WVDP\)](#), students from local high schools recently joined a competition based on environmental topics, with this year's special focus on adapting to climate change.



The Cattaraugus County Envirothon is an outdoor, hands-on competition that emphasizes teamwork while testing students' knowledge in aquatic ecology, forestry, soils and land use, and wildlife.

Allegany-Limestone High School Team #1 took first place in the event, followed by Olean High School at second and a second team from Allegany-Limestone High School at third. Nine teams from grades nine through 12 from five school districts competed for the county's Envirothon title.

"The Envirothon competition encourages students' interest in our environment and reinforces the importance of protecting our natural resources," EM WVDP Safety and Site Programs Team Leader Jennifer Dundas said. "It also aligns with EM's mission to build pathways for a diverse workforce to pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers that will solve some of the most complex challenges of our time."

The Cattaraugus County teams worked together to complete five exams at different stations where they identified various species of trees, wildlife and fish on display and answered questions about habitat and other environmental-related subjects. The team with the highest cumulative score from the exams is named the winner.

The local event is part of the broader Envirothon, which is the largest conservation education program in North America. Each year, over 25,000 high school students across the U.S, Canada and China participate in the competition held by the National Conservation Foundation. It begins at the local level with several schools from each county competing to advance to statewide, and ultimately continent-wide, events.

The Cattaraugus County Envirothon is organized by the Cattaraugus County Soil and Water Conservation District. The event is supported by local environmental groups, civic organizations and businesses, with help from more than 20 volunteers.

"We are glad to be a part of this environmental learning competition," said John Rendall, president and general manager of CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley, EM's cleanup contractor at WVDP. "Friendly competition stimulates learning and demonstrates the importance of balancing quality of life and the quality of the environment."

Allegany-Limestone High School Team #1 will go on to compete in the New York State Envirothon. Once a team is chosen as the state champion, its members become New York's representatives at the North American Envirothon.

-Contributor: Joseph Pillittere