

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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North Harford High School Envirothon Team Places Second in International Competition
HCPS Team represented Maryland and Missed First Place by One Point

Harford County Public Schools is proud to announce that North Harford High School's Envirothon team placed second overall at the 2025 NCF-Envirothon international competition, held July 20–26, 2025, at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Competing against more than 50 of the top teams from across the United States, Canada, and China, North Harford's students demonstrated exceptional environmental science knowledge, teamwork, and real-world problem-solving skills.

The team, composed of Frank DeLucia, Jacob Jestel, Jonathan VanBuskirk, Ryan Layman, and Samantha Hawk, represented Maryland after winning their third consecutive state title in June.

At the international level, they excelled in a rigorous series of written and hands-on tests covering aquatic ecology, forestry, soils and land use, wildlife, and the current issue topic, *Roots and Resiliency: Fostering Forest Stewardship in a Canopy of Change*.

North Harford earned a final score of 619.67, finishing just one point behind the first-place team from Lexington High School in Massachusetts (620.67). The top three teams delivered a final oral presentation to a panel of judges, and those scores combined with their field tests determined the final placement.

"It was an amazing experience, and I am humbled to have brought five of Harford County Public Schools' best," said team advisor and North Harford High School teacher Laura O'Leary. "These students studied their hearts out and achieved an amazing accomplishment in an incredibly competitive, high-level international event. To finish just one point behind first place speaks volumes about their dedication, teamwork, and depth of knowledge. I couldn't be prouder of how they represented our school, our county, and the state of Maryland."

In addition to their second-place overall finish, which earned the Team a \$10,000 scholarship, North Harford was recognized as the station winner in Aquatic Ecology, earning a \$1,500 scholarship for the team, sponsored by Canon USA.

"This team represented the very best of Harford County and Maryland on a global stage," said Superintendent Dr. Sean Bulson. "To finish second in the world, and just a single point away from the top, is remarkable. Their leadership, collaboration, and commitment to environmental stewardship makes us all proud."

The 2025 current issue topic challenged teams to explore forest health and sustainability, specifically in the Canadian province of Alberta, where forests cover 60% of the land. Teams were required to develop and present science-based, actionable solutions that combined Indigenous knowledge,

ecological research, and climate modeling, skills that reflect the growing complexity of environmental science careers.

This year's international recognition is the latest milestone for North Harford's Envirothon program. Team member Frank DeLucia has competed on all three of North Harford's state championship teams, while Jonathan VanBuskirk returned for his second year at the international level. Together, the five students demonstrated the impact of years of focused preparation and mentorship.

The international competition also caps off another strong year for environmental education across Harford County. In 2025, the Harford County Envirothon program included HCPS student teams from:

- Aberdeen High School – Advisor: Heather Runkle-Smith
- Bel Air High School – Advisors: Jordan Long & Tyler Hamilton
- C. Milton Wright High School – Advisors: Ashley Alexander & Rebecca Streett
- Edgewood High School – Advisors: Amy Blizzard & Rebecca Scarborough
- Fallston High School – Advisor: Craig McLeod
- Harford Technical High School – Advisor: Helen Cullinan
- Patterson Mill High School – Advisor: Jennifer Walker
- North Harford High School – Advisor: Laura O'Leary

“The strength of our county's Envirothon program is a direct reflection of the passion and leadership of our educators,” added Dr. Bulson. “This is a shining example of what's possible when students are challenged, supported, and given the tools to succeed.”

For over 30 years, the Harford Soil Conservation District has supported the local Envirothon program, helping prepare students not only for competition, but for careers in environmental science, agriculture, and sustainability. North Harford's international success stands as a testament to the program's lasting impact on students, schools, and the broader community.

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