



The Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge will proudly host the 2010 Palm Beach County Envirothon on April 8, 2010. This will be the 3rd time that this outdoor competition will take place at the refuge.

The Palm Beach County Envirothon is a problem-solving, natural resource education program for high school students. In this field-oriented program, students work together in teams of five, developing and using critical thinking, problem-solving and communication skills to solve oral and written questions and conduct hands-on activities on environmental issues.

Local environmental professionals from organizations and agencies such as Palm Beach County Environmental Resources Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) donate their time to assemble study materials and write questions for the teams. Materials focus on five natural resource categories: aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife and a current environmental issue which changes every year. The current issue for 2010 is Protection of Ground Water through Urban, Agricultural and Environmental Planning.

As part of the regional competition, each team is required to develop an Action Project on a topic of interest to them in community service, public awareness or environmental education. Teams then present it to a panel of judges. The Action Project may be as simple as establishing recycling or a butterfly garden at their school or as complex as developing a Migratory Bird Garden on the Loxahatchee River. 2009 winners, The Elementz from Jupiter Environmental Academy, worked with environmentalists from the Loxahatchee River District and consulted local experts about native plant selection, culture and migratory bird patterns and habits. They raised funds and solicited donated materials to create a suitable habitat for migratory birds. This garden will educate the public on migratory patterns for years to come.

The winning team from the PBC Envirothon goes on to compete at the Florida Envirothon and that winning team represents Florida at the National Canon Envirothon. Earlier this year, our Palm Beach County winners took 1st place at the Florida Envirothon and went on to place 6th at the Canon Envirothon where they were awarded \$1,700 each in scholarship funds. Annually, students from 45 states and seven Canadian Provinces compete in the National Canon Envirothon.

The first Envirothon competition in Florida was held in Palm Beach County in 1992. Sponsor Palm Beach Soil & Water Conservation District is celebrating 19 years of supporting environmental education. With the assistance of Habitat Specialists, Inc., they organize the Palm Beach County Envirothon. Last year over 110 students from eight schools competed in this regional event and over the past 18 years, more than 2000 students have participated. All Palm Beach County public, private and home-schooled students are invited to compete. Thirty teams from ten public and private schools have registered for the 2010 regional competition.

Many sponsors and partners help make the event possible, including SFWMD, Publix, FPL, Sugarcane Growers Cooperative and Friends of A.R.M. Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. Over 60 volunteers county-wide donate their time on the day of the event. For more information on how you can become a sponsor or volunteer, please contact the Palm Beach Soil & Water Conservation District office at 561-792-2727 or visit their website at www.pbswcd.org.

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