OREGON ENVIROTHON

2026

Advisor Guide

Oregon Envirothon Environmental Education Competition May 1, 2026

Oregon Envirothon Advisor Guide 2026

Contents

Envirothon Training Agenda

December 3, 2025, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
The Oregon Garden, Silverton

9:00 Welcome & Introduction to Envirothon 2026

Rikki Heath, Director of K-12 Education Programs, Oregon Forest Resources Institute

9:20 Water Everywhere: How People Tackle Nonpoint Water Pollution

Alexis Cooley, Basin Specialist, Western Region, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

10:35 Break

10:50 Introduction to Oral Presentation Scenario

11:20 Lunch

12:00 Nonpoint Source Pollution Classroom Activities (30 minutes per station)

Jenna Mendenhall, Lesson Plan: *Water Quality, Is There a Point?* from Penn State Extension

LeeAnn Mikkelson, Lesson Plan: *Sum of the Parts* from Project WET

1:10 Envirothon 101: Peer Teacher Panel

Emily Parent, North Salem High School

Chad DeYoung, McMinnville High School

Marissa Dey, Evergreen Virtual Academy

1:40 Break

1:55 Core Four Stations (20 minutes per station)

Forestry – *Julie Woodward, Oregon Forest Resources Institute*
Wildlife – *Leslie Comnes and Jenna Mendenhall, Oregon Forest Resources Institute*
Soils – *Marissa Theve and Natalie Edwards, Natural Resources Conservation Service*
Aquatics – *Kassi Roosth, Marion Soil and Water Conservation District*
Nenette Sequeira, City of Salem

3:30 Closing

Introduction

What is Envirothon?

Envirothon is a hands-on environmental problem-solving competition for high school-age students in the United States and Canada. Participating teams of five students compete in these natural resource categories:

- Aquatic ecology
- Soils and land use
- Forestry
- Wildlife
- A current environmental issue (a different one each year)

Led by a volunteer advisor, teams usually meet from late autumn until spring, and work cooperatively to develop their knowledge of ecology and natural resource management and to practice their environmental problem-solving skills in preparation for the competition.

Envirothon partners with local conservation districts, forestry associations, educators and cooperating natural resource agencies to organize and conduct competitions on the local, regional, state and/or provincial level. Winning teams from each state and province advance to the **North American Envirothon** for the opportunity to compete for scholarships and prizes.

Benefits

Combining in-class curriculum and hands-on field experiences, the **Envirothon** program is an excellent way to supplement environmental education inside and outside the traditional classroom. Many students step away from the **Envirothon** experience excited about learning and motivated to pursue careers in environmental studies, environmental law, natural sciences and natural resource management.

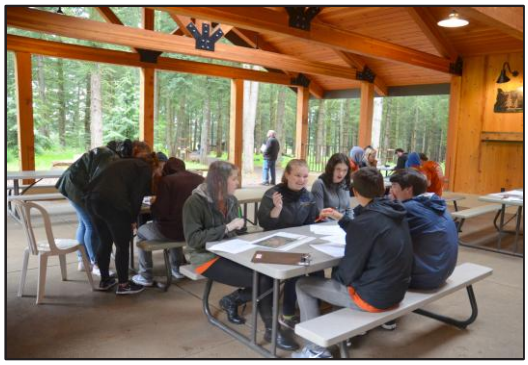
Envirothon stimulates, reinforces and enhances students' interest in the environment. It allows them the opportunity to get "up-close and personal" with their state's natural resources and to gain valuable knowledge in ecology and natural resource management principles and practices. Team trainings may include field trips to natural resource sites, museums or other areas of interest; listening to presentations given by natural resource professionals; and careful study of natural resource materials.

Mission and Goals

The mission of Oregon Envirothon is to develop knowledgeable, skilled and dedicated citizens who are willing and prepared to work towards achieving and maintaining a natural balance between the quality of human life and the quality of the environment.

This mission is accomplished by developing in young people an understanding of the principles and practices of natural resource management and ecology through dealing with complex resource management decisions.

The following goals guide the program.



Goal 1

To promote a desire to learn more about the natural environment and equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to apply the basic principles and practices of resource management and ecology to complex environmental issues.

Goal 2

To promote stewardship of natural resources and to encourage the development of critical thinking, cooperative problem-solving and decision-making skills required to achieve and maintain a natural balance between the quality of life and the quality of the environment.

Goal 3

To provide students with experience in environmentally oriented activities, enabling them to become environmentally-aware, action-oriented citizens.

Structure of the Oregon Competition

Important Dates to Remember

Team Registration Deadline: April 10, 2026

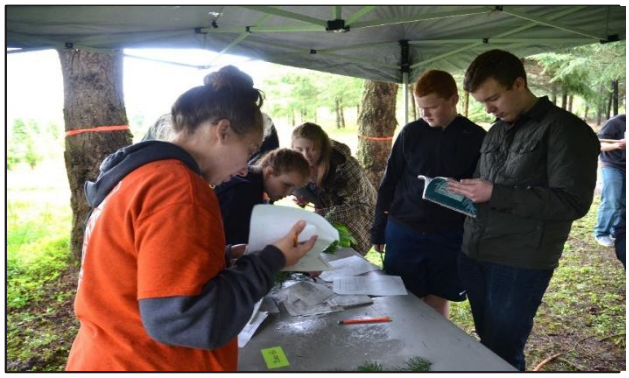
Oral Presentation Video Deadline: April 17, 2026

Competition Date: May 1, 2026

Teachers and students may prepare for the competition by using Oregon Envirothon's training tools, including study topics and suggested activities, available at www.oregonenvirothon.org. Each year's current environmental issue drives the educational focus of the competition. Oregon Envirothon uses the current environmental issue selected by National Conservation Foundation Envirothon (NCF-Envirothon) for the year.

Testing Stations

The one-day **Oregon Envirothon Competition** will test each team's knowledge and problem-solving skills at five testing stations:



- Aquatic Ecology
- Forestry
- Soils/Land Use
- Wildlife
- 2024 Current Environmental Issue

The tests contain multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, diagrams and short answer questions. Each test consists of approximately 25 questions, which are written and designed each year by conservation district and other natural resource professionals.

Teams will answer the test questions in the 25-minute time allotted for each station, completing one collective answer sheet for their team for the station. **Collaboration, cooperative decision-making, free exchange of ideas and information pooling within teams are desirable.**

All necessary testing equipment and supplies will be provided. ***Students are not allowed to bring notebooks, backpacks, electronic equipment of any kind or personal water bottles to the test sites.*** Each team's tests from the five testing stations will be graded, scored and totaled together.

Note that testing will take place at outdoor testing stations. Students need to dress appropriately for a range of weather conditions by dressing in layers, bringing jackets, and wearing footwear suitable for wet, muddy terrain.

Oral Presentations

Teams prepare an oral presentation on the year's Current Environmental Issue topic. Each team submits a video of their 10-minute oral presentation by **April 18th** to Oregon Envirothon's coordinator Rikki Heath at heath@ofri.org. The videos will be judged and scored prior to the competition. The oral presentations may include PowerPoint slides, flip charts or other necessary props or visual aids.

The two teams with the highest video scores will make live presentations in front of the judges and the student audience. They should be prepared for a five-minute question-and answer-time with the judges.

All team members must participate in the team's presentation. Visual aids are welcome and must be prepared in advance. A laptop computer and projector will be available for each team to use during their presentation, if needed. During the top team presentations, all team members must wear an Oregon Envirothon t-shirt. No school or team identification, either written or stated, is permitted.

Awards and Results

At the end of the testing periods, the video scores will be combined with the test scores to determine the top five teams. Awards will be given to teams who place first through fifth, to the winners of the oral presentation category, and to the teams who have the highest test scores for each of the five testing stations. Awards are also given for FFA and Future Natural Resource Leaders (FNRL). The overall champion of the Oregon Envirothon will have the option of representing Oregon at the **NCF- Envirothon in Starkville, Mississippi,** July 19 - 25, 2026. All results will be available that day.

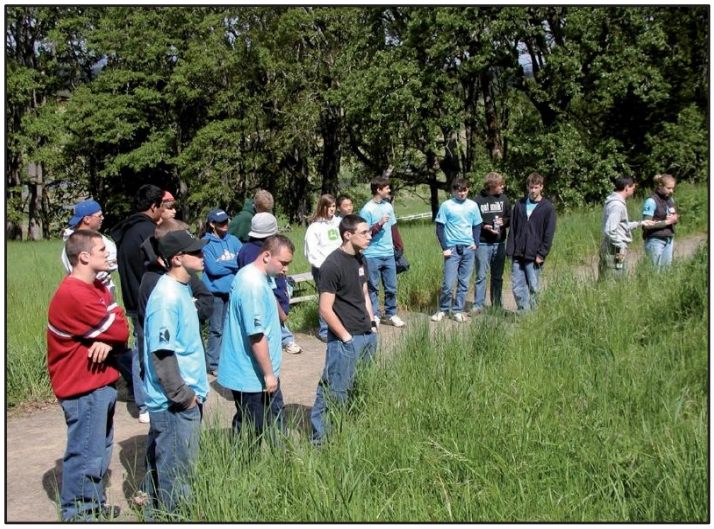
Day of the Event

On arrival at the competition, each team is assigned a **number** and a **test station rotation**. After the welcome and introductions, the Oregon Envirothon coordinator reviews with students the contest format, rules and scoring.

Testing Station Rotations

Once the competition begins, teams will have exactly 25 minutes to complete their tests and 10 minutes to move to the next station and get ready for the next test, for a total of 35 minutes for each rotation. They will answer the 20+ test questions in the time allotted, completing one collective answer sheet for their team.

Each test station rotation includes:



10-minute transition:

- Students are guided to the test site.
- Volunteers hand out the tests and pencils.
- Volunteers provide any necessary orientation information about the test (2-4 minutes).

25-minute testing period:

- Students work to answer the 20+ test questions.
- Volunteers notify the teams at the 20-minute mark that 5 minutes are remaining.
- Volunteers collect the tests at the 25-minute mark.

After each rotation, students are guided to the next test site and volunteers begin the next round of testing. Completed test sheets remain at the stations to be scored by volunteers. Runners will take the tests to the main scorer, who will calculate the scores.

Top Team Oral Presentations

The two teams with the highest video oral presentation scores will make live presentations in front of the judges and the student audience. There will be five minutes between presentations for scoring, set-up and preparation for the next team.

Presentation of Awards

After the competition and scoring is completed, teams will reassemble for overall results and presentation of awards.

Oregon Envirothon 202c
Rules & Regulations

1. Team members must be enrolled in grades 9-12 (home school, private school or public school).

2. Each team must have a maximum of five members and a minimum of three. Team members may not be drawn from different schools. One alternate is permitted for each team. **Teams with fewer than five members will not be allowed to advance to the National Conservation Foundation Envirothon (NCF-Envirothon).**

3. Alternate team members may substitute for regular team members if properly registered.

4. Teams will be issued a number that must be used during the competition. Switching team members will not be allowed after the registration of the team.

5. Teachers, team advisors or chaperones must accompany their teams to the competition but may not assist their teams in any way once the competition is under way. Team advisors must stay on site during the event.

6. The Oregon Envirothon shall consist of five competitive sites based on soils/land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife and the current environmental issue, and one video Oral Presentation on the current environmental problem. Judges' and scorers' decisions are final in all events.

7. Scoring for the Oregon Envirothon will be as follows:
   a. Each of the five outside testing sites will be worth 50 points for a total of 250 points.
   b. The video presentation will be worth 100 points.
   c. Teams earning the **top 2** video presentation scores will present LIVE at the Oregon Envirothon, and the LIVE scores will determine the winner of the Oral Presentation Category.
   d. The **top 5** teams for Oregon Envirothon will be determined using the scores from the five testing stations and the VIDEO presentation score.
   e. The total competition will be worth 350 points.

8. Teams will not be allowed to bring notes, field guides or other resource materials to the stations. Any necessary materials will be provided by Oregon Envirothon, including bottled water. **No backpacks or electronic devices of any kind or personal water bottles are allowed at the testing sites.**

9. Team members will work together to complete their field experiences and questions and submit one answer sheet before moving on to the next site. Twenty-five minutes will be allowed for the test at each field site and ten minutes will be given to rotate to the next site.

10. The winning team will be the team with the highest cumulative score from the six events (the five testing stations and the video presentation). The tie breaker will be the highest score from the oral presentation.

11. **Registration must be received by April 10, 2026.** All illegible registration forms will be rejected. Advisors must submit the Parental Consent Form and Medical Release Form for each team member to the Oregon Envirothon competition.

12. If the winning team cannot represent Oregon at the NCF-Envirothon, the team with the next highest score will be eligible to compete.

13. No tobacco, intoxicants or drugs will be allowed on site.

14. Rules and regulations of the Oregon Envirothon are subject to change. Any and all relevant changes will be explained to all teams and advisors.

Oregon Envirothon

Example Schedule - Day of Event

Student Activity Schedule

8:30 am	-	9:00am	Registration and breakfast at The Oregon Garden
9:00 am	-	9:15am	Welcome/Event Orientation
9:30 am	-	9:55am	Rotation #1
10:05 am	-	10:30am	Rotation #2
10:40 am	-	11:05am	Rotation #3
11:15 am	-	11:40am	Rotation #4
11:50 am	-	12:15pm	Rotation #5
12:15 pm	-	1:15pm	Lunch/Tabulations
			Announcement of Top 2 Oral Presentation Teams
			Oral Presentation preparation for Top 2 Teams
1:15 pm	-	1:35pm	Presentation from climate professionals
1:35 pm	-	1:55pm	1st Oral Presentation
1:55 pm	-	2:15pm	2nd Oral Presentation
2:15 pm	-	2:35pm	Tabulations
2:35 pm	-	3:00pm	Award Ceremony and Photo Session

Oregon Envirothon
Example Score Totals

Team Number_____

(Test Score/Possible Points)

Soils/Land Use Site	_____/50
Forestry Site	_____/50
Aquatic Ecology Site	_____/50
Wildlife Site	_____/50
Current Environmental Issue Site	_____/50
TEST TOTALS	_____/250
Video Oral Presentation	_____/50
FINAL SCORE	_____/350

Oregon Envirothon
Team Registration

To register your team, complete the registration form at www.oregonenvirothon.org/registration Registration will open on January 1, 2026, and close on April 17, 2026.

The registration fee of $100.00 per team (payable to **Oregon Envirothon**) must be received by **May 1, 2026** to secure your attendance. Either a check or school PO # is an acceptable form of payment. The $50.00 is nonrefundable and goes toward the cost of administering the program and competition.

Each team member must have a signed and completed parental consent form, submitted at registration at the Oregon Envirothon competition on May 1, 2026.

For more information, please contact:
Rikki Heath, Oregon Envirothon Coordinator
P.O. Box 463
Silverton, OR 97381
E-mail: heath@ofri.org
Phone: (503) 799-4792

Oregon Envirothon
Parental Consent Form

Dear Parent/Guardian:

We are excited for your student to participate in Oregon Envirothon at the Oregon Garden, hosted by the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI). It is of the utmost importance to the Oregon Envirothon committee and to OFRI that we provide a safe and fair event for all participants. In case of an emergency, the law requires that parental permission be obtained for medical care of minors (under age 18). The law also requires parental permission for the taking of pictures of minors. Please sign the following consent form. Thank you.

School/Group name: _____

Student name: _____

Mailing address:

_____

_____

Parent/guardian name: _____

In case of emergency, please list any numbers where parent/guardian can be reached:

_____ _____

_____ _____

Please provide any important medical information.

Allergies (food, drugs, insect, etc.)

_____

Special medical concerns or conditions

Page two for signature…

AUTHORIZATION FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

In the event of an emergency, accident or illness, I the undersigned parent/guardian give permission to the Oregon Envirothon/Oregon Forest Resources Institute to administer emergency medical care to my child and/or, if deemed necessary, to secure emergency medical services and incur expenses, for which I will be responsible for payment.
I further give permission to have my child treated by a physician who will perform any diagnostic, therapeutic and/or operative procedures as deemed necessary.

PHOTOGRAPHY AUTHORIZATION AND RELEASE

I hereby grant the Oregon Envirothon and Oregon Forest Resources Institute ("OFRI") permission to use, publish or display my minor child's likeness in any photographs and any reproduction thereof or any video or voice recordings in any of their publications, without payment or any other consideration. I understand and agree that such materials will become the property of Oregon Envirothon and OFRI and will not be returned. I hereby irrevocably authorize Oregon Envirothon and OFRI to prepare, edit, alter, copy, exhibit, publish or distribute the photographs or video or voice recordings for purposes of publicizing programs of Oregon Envirothon and OFRI, or for any other lawful purpose. In addition, I waive the right to inspect or approve the finished product, including written, audio or electronic copy, wherein my minor child's likeness or voice appears. I also give permission to Oregon Envirothon and OFRI to use my minor child's grade level in school, school name and school location as an accompaniment to the photo, video or voice recording. I hereby hold harmless, release and forever discharge Oregon Envirothon and OFRI from all claims, demands and causes of action which I, my heirs, representatives, executors, administrators, or any other persons acting on my behalf or on behalf of my estate may have by reason of this authorization.

I have read this authorization and release before signing below and I fully understand its contents, meaning and impact.

Signature of parent/guardian of minor:

_____

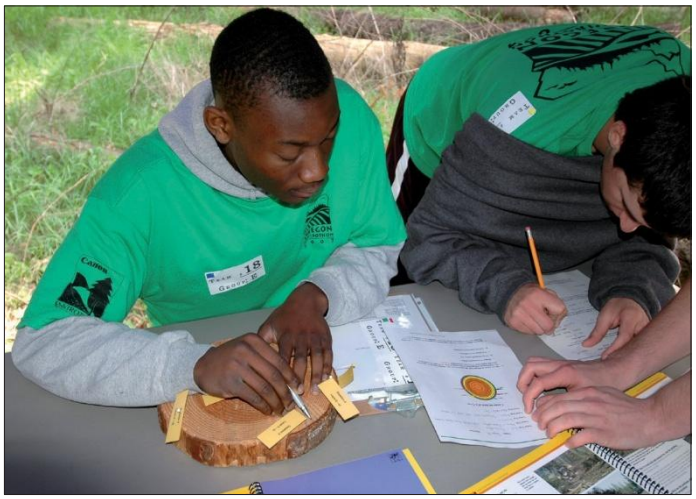
Date of signature: _____

Forest Ecology Study Guide

The following key points, learning objectives, and suggested activities will help you and your students prepare for the Forest Ecology component of the Oregon Envirothon competition. For study information specific to the North American competition, please see the Resources section on the NCF-Envirothon website at envirothon.org.

Key Point 1—Tree Physiology and Tree and Shrub Identification

Learning Objectives:



1. Know the parts and tissues of a tree and be able to explain the growth cycle and life cycle of a tree.
2. Understand the processes of photosynthesis and respiration and how they are important to the growth and reproduction of trees.
3. Identify tree and shrub species using a dichotomous key or field guide.

Suggested Activities:

1. Identify trees and shrubs from leaf and seed samples using a dichotomous key and a tree guide. Identify the common name and scientific (Latin) name for the following common trees and know their approximate ranges in Oregon:
   - Douglas-fir
   - Sitka Spruce
   - Western hemlock
   - Port-Orford-cedar
   - Junipers
   - Western larch
   - Western white pine
   - Oregon ash
   - Redwood
   - Englemann spruce
   - Western Redcedar
   - Incense cedar
   - Pacific yew
   - Red alder
   - Birches
   - Poplars
   - Lodgepole pine
   - Sugar pine
   - Bigleaf maple
   - Oregon white oak
   - Ponderosa pine
   - Cottonwoods
   - Vine maple
   - True firs (6)

Key Point 2—Forest Ecology

Learning Objectives:

1. Know the typical forest structure: canopy, understory and ground layers and crown classes.
2. Understand forest ecology concepts and factors affecting them, including the relationship between soil and forest types, tree communities, regeneration, competition, and primary and secondary succession.
3. Identify the abiotic and biotic factors in a forest ecosystem and understand how these factors affect tree growth and forest development. Consider factors such as climate, weather, fire, insect outbreaks, microorganisms, and wildlife.
4. Understand that Oregon is home to a variety of forest types, primarily dominated by coniferous trees like Douglas-fir, Western hemlock, Sitka spruce, and Ponderosa pine, with each type adapted to its specific climate and geography.

Suggested Activities:

1. Draw and compare food webs of a mature deciduous forest and a mature coniferous forest. Explain how wildlife habitat relates to the forest community and describe the niches of various organisms that live in both forest ecosystems.
2. Examine a "tree cookie" or core sample taken with an increment borer to determine the age, growing conditions, insect and disease damage, and past weather conditions.
3. Understand the ecology of fire: Explore patterns of change brought about by fires in a forest ecosystem.
4. Identify, understand the life cycles of, and know common control techniques for the following insect pests and diseases of trees in Oregon, including integrated pest management:
   - Armillaria
   - Dwarf Mistletoe
   - Emerald Ash Borer
   - Flat Headed Borers
   - Heartrot
   - Spruce Budworm
   - Swiss needle cast
   - Western Pine Beetle
   - White Pine Blister Rust

Key Point 3—Sustainable Forest Management

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the term silviculture and be able to explain the uses of the following silviculture techniques: forest health thinning , prescribed burning, planting, harvesting (including single tree and group tree selection), shelterwood method, and clear-cutting with and without seed trees.
2. Know how to use forestry tools and equipment in order to measure tree diameter, height, volume and basal area.

3. Understand how the following issues are affected by forest health and management: biodiversity, forest fragmentation, forest health, air quality, aesthetics, fire, global climate change and recreation.
4. Describe sustainability and understand how sustainable forestry management practices and the Oregon forest protection laws and policies protect forests for future generations.
5. Understand that forests are managed to reflect the interests and practices of different landowners, which in Oregon include the state and federal governments, private timber companies, tribes and small woodland owners.
6. Understand how economic, social and ecological factors influence forest management decisions.
7. Understand that science and technology are used in all aspects of forest management.

Suggested Activities:

1. Use the following forestry tools and know how they are used in forest management: clinometer, increment borer, diameter tape, Biltmore stick, abney level, compass, prism and relescope.
2. Use a variety of volume tables to calculate the volume of lumber for several different tree species.
3. Compare two different forest types of Oregon (for example, a juniper woodland in eastern Oregon and a conifer forest in western Oregon). Identify economic, social and ecological factors that affect how both of these forests are managed.
4. Explain the information technology used to monitor and effectively manage forests, and give specific examples of how this technology is being used in various aspects of forest management.

Key Point 4—Trees as an Important Renewable Resource

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the importance and value of trees in urban and community settings and know the factors affecting their health and survival.
2. Understand the economic value of forests and know many of the products they provide to people and society.
3. Explain the "ecosystem services" provided by trees and understand why trees and forests are important to human health, recreation, wildlife and watershed quality.

Suggested Activities:

1. Use the online tool *i-Tree* to calculate the tree benefits and ecosystem services provided by individual trees.

2. Create a display showing the value of trees in both urban and suburban settings. Identify the factors that affect their health and survival and explain how to properly care for trees in an urban environment.
3. Make a list of products and by-products that come from your home and are made from trees. Describe the chemical and physical properties of trees used in making these products.

Aquatic Ecology Study Guide

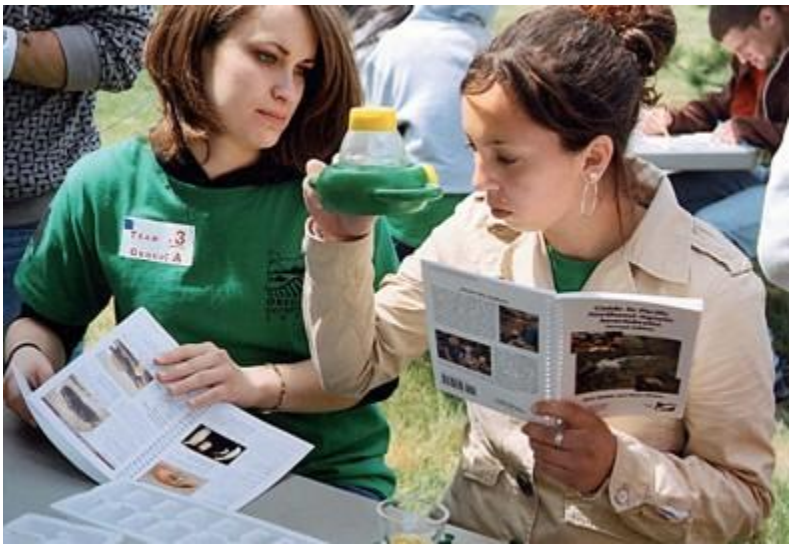
The following key points, learning objectives, and suggested activities will help you and your students prepare for the Aquatic Ecology component of the Oregon Envirothon competition. For study information specific to the North American competition, please see the Resources section on the NCF-Envirothon website at envirothon.org.

Key Point 1—Abiotic factors

Learning Objectives:

1. Know the processes and phases for each part of the water cycle and understand the water cycle's role in soil nutrient erosion, salinization of agricultural lands, and climatic influences.
2. Understand the concept and components of a watershed and be able to identify stream orders and watershed boundaries. Know the features of a healthy watershed and an unhealthy watershed.
3. Know how to perform and interpret chemical water quality tests and understand why aquatic organisms and water quality are affected by the physical, chemical and biological conditions of the water.

Suggested Activities:



1. Use topographic maps to investigate the concept of a watershed, identify a river's watershed system, and delineate the watershed of a given area. Be able to describe how different land uses and watershed characteristics can affect water runoff, water flow, types of stream habitats and management approaches.
2. Investigate and find out who is using the water in your watershed and become familiar with historic stream and river levels to learn if levels are increasing or decreasing. Use stream assessment data to determine the health of your watershed.

3. Conduct chemical water quality tests to determine the temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, phosphorus, alkalinity, nitrogen, and dissolved oxygen percent saturation of a water sample and explain why these test results are indicators of water quality and can be used to assess and manage aquatic environments.

Key Point 2—Biotic factors

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the dependence of all organisms on one another and how energy and matter flow within an aquatic ecosystem.
2. Understand the concept of carrying capacity for a given aquatic ecosystem and be able to discuss how competing water usage may affect the ability of the system to sustain wildlife, forestry, and anthropogenic needs.
3. Identify common, rare, threatened and endangered aquatic species as well as Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) through the use of a key.
4. Know how to perform biological water quality monitoring tests and understand why these tests are used to assess and manage aquatic environments.

Suggested Activities:

1. Describe the habitat needs of three specific aquatic animals, and compare and contrast the flow of energy in three different aquatic food chains.
2. Create a visual display of rare and endangered aquatic species. Explain how human activities are causing species imperilment and specify actions being taken to protect these species.
3. Conduct a biological stream assessment by collecting macro-invertebrates. Stream Data sheets should be used to record and analyze information. Explain why these organisms are biological indicators that help us determine the health of a stream or waterway.

Key Point 3—Aquatic Environments

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify aquatic and wetland environments based on their physical, chemical and biological characteristics.
2. Know characteristics of different types of aquifers, and understand historical trends and threats to groundwater quantity and quality.
3. Understand societal benefits and ecological functions of wetlands.
4. Understand the functions and values of riparian zones and be able to identify riparian zone areas.

Suggested Activities:

1. Describe the physical, chemical and biological characteristics of a stream, river, pond, lake and wetland.
2. Explain how different types of aquifers are indicators of water quantity and water quality. Describe how subsidence and salt water intrusion are related to the falling water table in many aquifers.
3. Describe three functions of wetlands and explain how these functions are met in the absence of wetlands.
4. Describe three functions of riparian zones and explain how the removal of or damage to the riparian zone would affect water quality and specific aquatic food chains.

Key Point 4—Water Protection and Conservation

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand how education programs and enforcement agencies are working together to protect aquatic habitats and prevent those who use our waterways from inadvertently transporting Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) from one river to another.
2. Interpret major provincial and /or federal laws and methods used to protect water quality (i.e., surface and groundwater). Utilize this information to propose management decisions that would improve the quality of water in a given situation.
3. Be familiar with the Federal and state agencies that provide oversight of water resources, and understand that Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is a useful and important tool in the management of water resources.
4. Identify global and local sources of point and non-point source pollution and be able to discuss methods to reduce point and non-point source pollution.
5. Understand the interaction of competing uses of water for water supply, hydropower, navigation, wildlife, recreation, waste assimilation, irrigation, and industry.
6. Know the meaning of water conservation and understand why it is important every time you turn on a faucet.

Suggested Activities:

1. List at least 3 Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) and describe their effects on an aquatic ecosystem. Consider what can happen when predator ANS are imported, and develop a plan for the eradication of a target ANS.
2. Cite water protection laws at a mock hearing to decide whether a permit should be given to build a new shopping mall along a river.

3. Explain how Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are being used to help communities assess water quality and watershed health information.
4. Compare water usage in different regions of Oregon and propose actions to help counties strike a balance between supply and demand in order to realize maximum benefit from our water resources.
5. Design a comprehensive water conservation plan for your home and the watershed below your home. This should include groundwater replenishment, securing sediment on your property, managing non-point source pollution and following the path of good quality water as it leaves your property on its way to the sea.
6. Many dams are used to provide low-cost electricity at the critical time of day when there is peak demand for electricity. Today, a major issue is deciding which is more important to the economy, low-cost energy or improving/restoring the ecology of a river. Evaluate the issue and develop recommendations for conservation groups and utility executives.

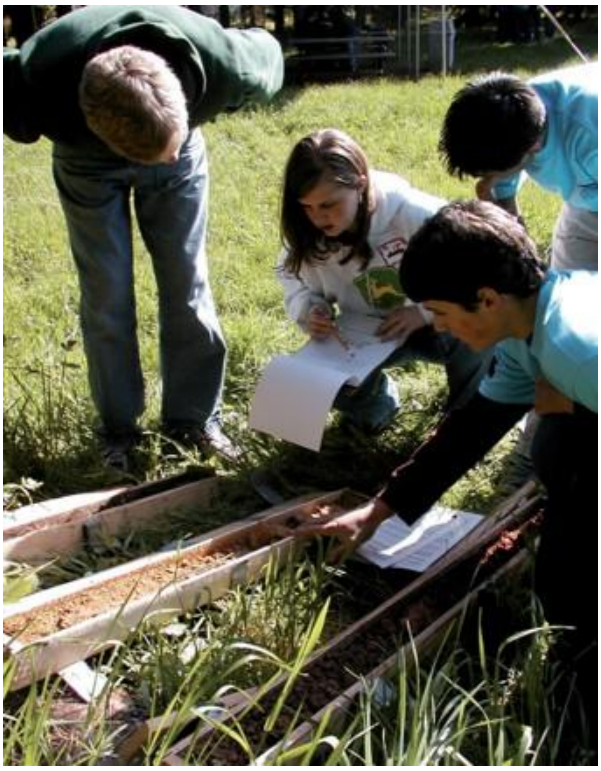
Soils and Land Use Study Guide

The following key points, learning objectives, and suggested activities will help you and your students prepare for the Soils and Land Use component of the Oregon Envirothon competition. See also the *Oregon Envirothon Soils and Land Use Manual*, available at oregonenvirothon.org for additional resources. For study information specific to the North American competition, please see the Resources section on the NCF-Envirothon website at envirothon.org.

Key Point 1—Physical Properties of Soil and Soil Formation

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the importance of soils and appreciate the relatively small amount of usable soil that exists on Earth.
2. Know the five soil forming factors and understand how they influence soil properties.
3. Identify soil parent materials.
4. Understand the soil forming processes: additions, losses, translocations, and transformations.
5. Identify and describe soil horizon characteristics:
    a. texture
    b. structure
    c. color (using Munsell color charts)
6. Understand how soil profile characteristics can determine basic soil properties and limitations and be used to classify soils.



Suggested Activities:

1. Generate a list of reasons why soils and the study of soil science are important to sustaining life on Earth. Explore how much soil on Earth is available for human use with a cut up apple as a model (see "Apple as the Earth's Soil" for an example.)

2. Describe the five factors of soil formation and be able to explain how each factor affects the soil profile.
3. Examine a soil pit. Describe soil characteristics for each horizon and record your data on the "NRCS Soil Description form, SOI-232" provided in the Oregon Envirothon Soils and Land Use Manual.
4. Use Web Soil Survey or SoilWeb to look at different soil profiles and Official Series Descriptions in your area. Describe differences between the soil types such as texture, drainage and permeability (or saturated hydraulic conductivity), use and vegetation, and geographic setting.
5. Estimate percent sand, silt, and clay for soil samples and determine texture class using the texture triangle. Explain how texture is important and what other soil characteristics it can affect.

Key Point 2—Soil Ecosystems

Learning Objectives:

1. Recognize that biological diversity is crucial to soil health and hence plant, human, and environmental health.
2. Understand how the hydrologic, carbon, and nutrient cycles relate to soil management.
3. Recognize that ecosystem biodiversity is often a reflection of soil biodiversity.

Suggested Activities:

1. Draw a soil food web and discuss why biodiversity is important to healthy soil. For inspiration, see the "Organisms" section of the *Oregon Envirothon Soils and Land Use Manual*.
2. Diagram the nitrogen, carbon, and phosphorus cycles and identify the types of organisms involved. Identify their roles in organic matter decomposition and nutrient cycling.
3. Discuss how the different soil types described in the Soil Classification and Land Use section of the *Oregon Envirothon Soils and Land Use Manual* support different types of ecosystems. Imagine which kinds of plants can grow in each system and how they affect soil.

Key Point 3—Chemical Properties of Soil and Soil Fertility

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand how to sample a soil for lab analysis.
2. Know that plants receive nutrients from the soil and return organic matter to the soil as they break down.
3. Understand how soil fertility relates to the physical and chemical properties of the soil.

Suggested Activities:

1. Collect a soil sample and measure pH, nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), and Potassium (K). Record your data and discuss the results. Refer to the Soil Investigations section of the *Oregon Envirothon Soils and Land Use Manual* to learn about soil sampling tools and to Oregon State University's *A Guide to Collecting Soil Samples for Farms and Gardens* (available online).
2. Explain how soil characteristics like texture and organic matter content may affect nutrient management. Hint: think about leaching and how water and nutrients move in the soil profile.
3. Discuss the risks and benefits of using synthetic fertilizer compared to compost. How might this change for a bare area versus one covered in vegetation?

Key Point 4—Soil Conservation and Land Use Management

Learning Objectives:

1. Name common land uses in Oregon and explain how they affect the soil.
2. Discuss how soils filter water and how slope plays a role. See the Soil Permeability/K_{sat}, Slope, and Soil Drainage Classes sections of the *Oregon Envirothon Soils and Land Use Manual*.
3. Describe natural resource career opportunities and the role of government in managing land.

Suggested Activities:

1. Identify different land uses on a map of Oregon and discuss what kinds of soils support them. Use Web Soil Survey or SoilWeb to look at soil profile descriptions in these areas. Discuss how different management might affect the soil and how the soil characteristics might limit land use.
2. Practice using topographic maps to measure slope and compare this to an elevation map made from LiDAR data. Discuss different areas on your map and where you might expect more or less soil erosion and why.
3. Measure slope outside using a clinometer or slope finder and discuss what might happen during a heavy rain event. Notice the ground cover or lack thereof. If possible, dig a small soil pit or push a piece of wire into the topsoil and determine if compaction is present. Classify the soil's permeability/ K_{sat}, drainage class, and slope class. Discuss whether this area would filter water and why or why not.
4. Browse the Natural Resources Conservation Service's careers website. Identify your local Soil and Water Conservation District and look at the staff page. If possible, invite staff to talk to your class about what they do.

Wildlife Ecology Study Guide

The following key points, learning objectives, and suggested activities will help you and your students prepare for the Wildlife Ecology component of the Oregon Envirothon competition. For study information specific to the North American competition, please see the Resources section on the NCF-Envirothon website at envirothon.org.

Key Point 1—Knowledge of Wild Birds, Mammals and Herps

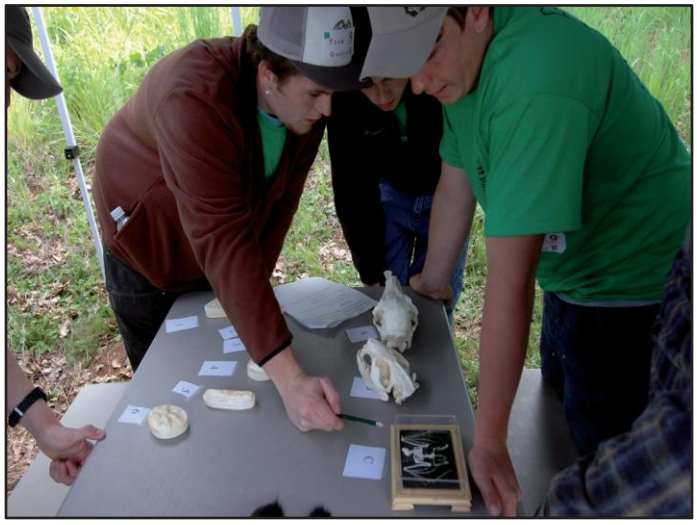
Learning Objectives:

1. Identify wildlife species using mounted specimens, skins/pelts, pictures, skulls, silhouettes, decoys, wings (waterfowl), scats, tracks, animal sounds, or other common signs. Animal tracks may be original or molds made of the prints. Wildlife signs may be real or reproduced.
2. Use a key or field guide to identify wildlife species or signs. Wildlife species or signs may be presented in any form as described above.
3. Identify general food habits (herbivore, omnivore, carnivore), habitats (terrestrial, aquatic, fossorial), and habits (diurnal, nocturnal) using skull morphology and/or teeth.

Key Point 2—Wildlife Ecology

Learning Objectives:

1. Know the meaning of "habitat," and be able to name the habitat requirements for wildlife and the factors that affect wildlife suitability.
2. Know and understand basic ecological concepts and terminology.
3. Understand the difference between an ecosystem, community and population. Be able to explain how communities interact with their non-living surroundings to form ecosystems.



4. Understand wildlife population dynamics such as birth, mortality, age-structure, sex ratio, and mating systems. Understand the impact of limiting and decimating factors of common wildlife species on wildlife management.
5. Recognize that all living things must be well-adapted to their native environment in order to survive. Be able to identify, describe and explain the advantages of specific anatomical, physiological and/or behavioral adaptations of wildlife to their environment.
6. Know the meaning of the term "biodiversity," and understand why biodiversity is important to people and wildlife.
7. Understand the importance of the 3 levels of biodiversity: genetics, species and ecosystem or community, and understand the implications of biodiversity loss at each level.

Suggested Activities:

1. Draw a map of an area and identify sources of food, water and shelter available to wildlife. Select a wildlife species and assess whether the area on your map will provide suitable habitat for this species. If any part of the habitat is lacking, explain what you could do to improve the habitat for this species?
2. Explain the relationship between the Pyramid of Numbers and the Pyramid of Biomass. Relate this exercise to an actual habitat to help you understand how much land area is needed to support life at each level of the food chain.
3. Create a detailed display to show examples of different types of food chains and illustrate the interdependence of organisms within a food web. Include terms such as tropic levels, predator, prey, scavengers, decomposers, omnivore, insectivore, herbivore, carnivore, producer, primary consumer, secondary consumer and tertiary consumer.
4. Explain the term "ecosystem" and give examples of different types of ecosystems. Describe a type of ecosystem and explain the importance of a keystone species. Draw food chains that include a specific keystone species and discuss what might happen if this species was removed from the food chain or if its population was diminished.
5. Select several wildlife species common to your area and list potential limiting and decimating factors for each. Visit a natural area, park, forest, and/or farm and assess the area to determine which of the limiting and decimating factors on your list would actually impact your selected species. For example, water may be a potential limiting factor, but the area you visit may have an abundance of water. Therefore, water would not be a limiting factor in this area and would have no impact.
6. Explain why Oregon is so diverse and explain what is being done to protect the biodiversity of wildlife. Include the following vocabulary to help you explain your answer: biodiversity, keystone species, native, endemic, habitat, biome, and food web.
7. Compare and contrast the behavioral and physiological adaptations of specific animals that live in two different environments. Explain why these animals are well-adapted to survive in their particular environment and include wildlife biology terms to describe specific

adaptations.

8. Web Lesson: Measuring Biodiversity across North America

   As a result of completing an investigation into the biodiversity of North American Mammals, students should develop an understanding of the concept of biodiversity, and learn ways to measure the diversity of organisms. In addition, students should become more familiar with the mammal communities and ecoregions in their residential areas and the biomes and ecoregions in Oregon.

9. Explain the three levels of biodiversity and give several reasons why biodiversity is important to wildlife and people. Select examples of species in your area that have become locally extinct and explain what causes loss of biodiversity. What can be done to gain biodiversity?

Key Point 3—Conservation and Management of Wildlife

Learning Objectives:

1. Know the preferred habitat types and specific habitat requirements of common wildlife species in Oregon. Understand how this knowledge helps us to better protect both the land and the wildlife species that depend on it.
2. Understand the difference between biological and cultural carrying capacity, and be able to identify social and ecological considerations where human use of land conflicts with wildlife habitat needs.
3. Identify common wildlife management practices and methods that are being used to manage and improve wildlife habitat in Oregon.
4. Understand the role of federal and state Fish and Wildlife Agencies in the management, conservation, protection, and enhancement of fish and wildlife and their habitats.

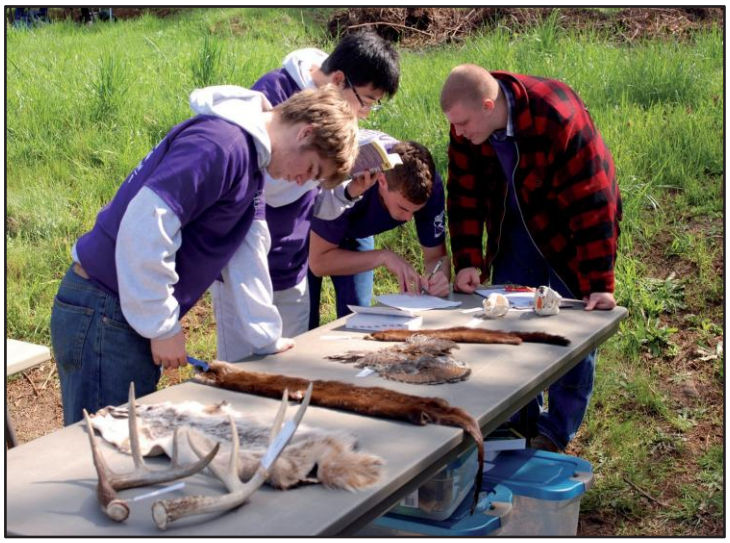
Suggested Activities:

1. Explain the meaning of the terms “migration route” and “flyway.” Know the four major North American flyways and understand the importance of these routes to migratory land, water and shore birds.
2. Determine which common wildlife species in your area depend on open land, woodland and wetland habitat for their survival. Identify the various types of habitats within open lands, woodlands, and wetlands, and explain the importance of these specific habitats to common wildlife species within your area.
3. Explain why human land use is the major cause of habitat loss. Provide examples of habitat destruction, fragmentation, and degradation and explain how wildlife species survival is threatened by habitat loss in Oregon.
4. Research and analyze controversial issues in order to understand the relationship between wildlife, economics and society.

5. Make a list of wildlife management practices and strategies that will restore or improve habitat for each of the following land uses: cropland, grassland, woodland, wetland, pond/lake, and urban setting (backyards, greenways, urban parks). Include specific wildlife species that will benefit from each wildlife practice or strategy.
6. Make a list of the Federal and State Fish and Wildlife Agencies within Oregon. Determine how each protects and manages the wildlife resources of your area, and describe activities and programs that are undertaken to protect and manage wildlife and their habitats.
7. Explain regulated trapping procedures and discuss the issues that are involved in trapping fur bearing animals. Research and explain the dilemma of biological carrying capacity vs. cultural carrying capacity in your discussion.
8. Explain how Wildlife Managers are using Satellite Remote Sensing, GPS and GIS in Conservation and Wildlife Management. Give an example explaining the benefits of using this technology in remote areas.

Key Point 4—Issues Involving Wildlife and Society

Learning Objectives:



1. Understand how non-native (exotic), invasive species threaten our environment and the biodiversity of many wildlife species. Understand that non-native (exotic), invasive plants impact wildlife habitat and thus have a tremendous impact on native wildlife.
2. Learn about the complexities of decision-making in land use situations that affect wildlife, and understand that wildlife resources are under constant pressure caused by human population growth, environmental degradation, and habitat reduction.
3. Know that wildlife species are subject to diseases resulting from exposure to microbes, parasites, toxins, and other biological and physical agents.
4. Understand the terminology and factors that affect threatened and endangered wildlife species. Know the meaning of extinct, extirpated, endangered, threatened, candidate species and reintroduction.
5. Identify the characteristics that many extinct and endangered species possess and be able

to identify many species of wildlife that are endangered and threatened.

6. Understand the role of the Endangered Species Act in helping to conserve endangered and threatened species. Know the organizations and agencies responsible for listing and protecting endangered species on global, federal and state levels.

Suggested Activities:

1. Give specific examples of non-native (exotic), invasive species in your area and describe how they have altered habitats, threatened ecosystems, and impacted wildlife. Explain what is being done to increase awareness and facilitate effective prevention and management of non-native (exotic) invasive species.
2. Explain the three major kinds of habitat loss. Give examples of how human activity is the biggest threat to wildlife habitat and also discuss how people can have a positive impact on wildlife habitat and biodiversity.
3. HIPPO is an acronym that represents the five major threats to biodiversity, which are caused by human activity. Design a poster to illustrate the HIPPO concept and factors that bring about the loss of biodiversity.
4. Name and describe two examples of diseases that are critically impacting wildlife and explain why controlling emerging wildlife diseases have become a high-priority concern in the United States. Explain the life cycles of these diseases and how they can be transmitted to humans.
5. Identify and describe factors that threaten and endanger wildlife species in your area. Explain what actions are being taken by various agencies and interest groups to improve the chance of survival for specific threatened and endangered species. Also, determine what practical measures private citizens can take to assist in the recovery of threatened and endangered species.
6. Select several endangered species and create a display to describe the characteristics that have made these species more vulnerable. Discuss state and federal efforts being taken to protect these species.

2026 Oregon Envirothon Current Issue

Nonpoint Source Pollution Mitigation – It Begins at Home!

Introduction

Clean water is a fundamental need for people, fish and wildlife, and the environment. It is vital for thriving communities and economies. Despite the importance of clean water, the most recent assessment of the health of Oregon's waters found that 37% of the waters assessed were impaired (Source: Protecting Oregon's Drinking Water Sources).

A growing number of Oregon communities are facing challenges to reliably accessing clean, affordable water for drinking and sanitation. These challenges are only expected to become more complex as the state's population grows, our built infrastructure ages, natural systems degrade and climate change stresses water supplies (Source: Protecting Oregon's Drinking Water Sources).

Nonpoint source pollution refers to pollution that doesn't come from a single, identifiable source but instead comes from many diffuse sources across the landscape. In Oregon, it often results from rainwater running over the land and picking up pollutants. This runoff can carry things such as fertilizer from farms, oil from roads or sediment from construction sites, which end up in nearby streams and rivers. Nonpoint source pollution is one of the biggest threats to Oregon's water quality. It also impacts aquatic habitats, especially for salmon and other native species that depend on clean, cold water.

The Clean Water Act (CWA) is the main federal law protecting water quality in the United States. Passed in 1972, it was originally designed to regulate point source pollution — pollution that comes from a single, identifiable source, such as a pipe or factory — through a permit system. To address nonpoint source pollution, Congress added Section 319 to the CWA in 1987. Section 319 requires states to create plans for managing nonpoint source pollution and provides tools and federal funding to support solutions.

In Oregon, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) runs the state's Nonpoint Source Program. One strategy DEQ uses to address both point and nonpoint source water pollution is the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) process, which focuses on restoring water quality to meet state standards. A TMDL plan determines how much pollution can go into a river or stream without it being dangerous to human health or other uses of that water body (Source: Oregon Department of Environmental Quality: Total Maximum Daily Loads). The CWA requires states, or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to develop a TMDL for each water body on the state's polluted waters list (also known as the 303(d) list or Integrated Report) and then

allocate that load among different sources, including nonpoint sources. The TMDL process is just one strategy used to clean up polluted waters.

In Oregon, people are reducing nonpoint source pollution through community action, education and policy. Farmers and forest managers use practices such as planting buffer strips, limiting chemicals and improving drainage to reduce runoff. Cities add green infrastructure — rain gardens, bioswales and permeable pavement — to filter stormwater. Watershed councils restore streams, remove invasive plants and replant natives. Education programs from schools, nonprofits and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality show residents how actions such as proper pet waste disposal, lawn chemical reduction and septic maintenance protect water quality. Together, these efforts help keep Oregon's waterways clean for people and wildlife.

Key Topics and Objectives

Key Topic #1: Nonpoint Source Pollution Status

Learning Objectives:

1. **Define** nonpoint source (NPS) pollution and differentiate it from point source pollution using real-world examples from urban and rural settings.
2. **Identify** major sources and pathways of NPS pollution in surface waters, such as stormwater runoff, agriculture and impervious surfaces.
3. **Explain** how changes in watershed ecology (e.g., water and nutrient cycles) influence NPS pollution.
4. **Describe** the impacts of NPS pollution on water quality and designated water uses (such as recreation, fisheries and drinking water).

Resources

NCF-Envirothon Resources: See pages 4-45 in the 2026 Envirothon Current Environmental Issue Study Resources guide.

Oregon Resources:

- **Nonpoint Source Pollution webpage** – Oregon DEQ
  Links to resources about NPS pollution in Oregon.
- **Nonpoint Source Success Stories: Oregon** – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
  Case studies showing how NPS pollution has impacted Oregon rivers and how it's been addressed.
- **Water Quality & Quantity** – Oregon Conservation Strategy
  Explains how watershed processes (e.g., water cycle or nutrient cycles) affect NPS pollution and water quality.

- **Protecting Oregon's Drinking Water Sources** – Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts
  Provides information on how to use land conservation strategies to protect drinking water sources, including how to reduce NPS pollution such as sediment, nutrients and runoff.

Other Resources:

- **Watersheds and Nonpoint Source Pollution** – PBS
  A five-part series introducing students to scientific models that help them conceptualize watersheds and their importance for managing nonpoint sources of pollution.
- **Nonpoint Source Discovery Kit Tutorial** – NOAA
  A suite of webpages that introduce students to the history and types of nonpoint source pollution, and to methods used to detect, assess and reduce its effect on the environment.

Key Topic #2: NPS in a Growing World and Your Role in It

Learning Objectives:

1. **Explain** how population growth, urban expansion and agricultural intensification contribute to NPS pollution locally and globally.
2. **Compare** how different land use types (urban, suburban, agricultural) affect runoff volume and pollutant loading.
3. **Identify** common products and everyday activities that contribute to NPS pollution.
4. **Illustrate** how personal choices and environmental footprints relate to NPS pollution.

Resources

NCF-Envirothon Resources: See pages 46-82 in the 2026 Envirothon Current Environmental Issue Study Resources guide.

Oregon Resources:

- **Keeping Drinking Water Safe** – Oregon Forest Resources Institute
  Report of a study that found that forested watersheds in Oregon produce higher-quality source water than any other type of surface water source.

Key Topic #3: The Role of the Individual/Community in NPS Issues and Solutions

Learning Objectives:

1. **Describe** the roles and actions individuals, families and communities can take to reduce NPS pollution through behavior change and local initiatives (e.g., storm drain markings, rain gardens and stream cleanups).

2. **Identify** city/county services that contribute to NPS issues and solutions (e.g., garbage service, building permits and road maintenance).
3. **Compare** the effectiveness of individual vs. collective actions in mitigating NPS pollution at the watershed scale.
4. **Design or assess** a local outreach or NPS monitoring project, such as a stormwater audit or pollution prevention campaign.

Resources

NCF-Envirothon Resources: See pages 83-111 in the 2026 Envirothon Current Environmental Issue Study Resources guide.

Oregon Resources:

- **Oregon Watershed Councils**
  Local councils meet regularly in their communities to assess conditions in a given watershed and to conduct projects that restore or enhance the watershed. This resource provides a map and list of watershed councils and their contact information.

- **Oregon Watershed Restoration Inventory –** Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
  This database tracks voluntary actions of private citizens and landowners who have worked in partnership with federal, state and local groups to improve aquatic habitat and water quality conditions.

- **Oregon-based environmental organizations, including**:
  - Oregon Environmental Council: Works to protect Oregon's water, air and land, including advocating for policies to reduce urban and agricultural runoff and prevent water pollution. See their Clean Water webpage.
  - Columbia Riverkeeper: Works in solidarity with Tribes to restore clean water and healthy fish from toxic pollution in the Columbia.
  - Oregon Rural Action: Works to address nitrate pollution in the Lower Umatilla Basin.

Key Topic #4: Strategies to Evaluate NPS Sources, Issues and Solutions

Learning Objectives

1. **Identify** tools and techniques used to assess and monitor NPS pollution, including watershed mapping, stormwater flow tracing and visual assessment, and describe the challenges with each.
2. **Explain** how water quality indicators (e.g., turbidity, presence of E. coli and nutrients) can be used to evaluate NPS pollution.
3. **Interpret** basic field data, maps and aerial imagery to locate potential sources of NPS pollution and recommend solutions.

Resources

NCF-Envirothon Resources: See pages 112-145 in the 2026 Envirothon Current Environmental Issue Study Resources guide.

Oregon Resources:

- **Oregon Explorer Water Map Viewer** – Oregon Water Resources Department
  Access data and create a water report for an area of interest within Oregon. The report includes information about water quality, water quantity, water rights and more.
- **Water Quality Monitoring Strategy 2020** – Oregon DEQ
  Describes the statewide water monitoring and assessment program for providing high quality, publicly accessible data to address water quality program needs.

Key Topic #5: Legislation, Regulations and Voluntary Measures

Learning Objectives

1. **Summarize** major U.S. and Oregon state policies and programs that address NPS pollution, including the U.S. Clean Water Act (especially Sections 303 and 319) and Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), Oregon water quality standards, and local regulations aimed at protecting water resources.
2. **Differentiate** between regulatory and voluntary approaches to controlling NPS pollution and identify examples of each.
3. **Describe** how federal and state agencies support local communities in managing NPS pollution through funding, education and technical assistance.

Resources

NCF-Envirothon Resources: See pages 146-170 in the 2026 Envirothon Current Environmental Issue Study Resources guide.

Oregon Resources:

- **Nonpoint Source Pollution webpage** – Oregon DEQ
  Links to resources about NPS pollution in Oregon.
- **Oregon Nonpoint Source Management Program Plan (2022-2026)** – Oregon DEQ
  Describes Oregon's programs and process for preventing and controlling nonpoint source pollution.

- **Oregon Water Quality Program Plan (2025-2027)** – Oregon DEQ
  Provides a broad overview of Oregon DEQ's Water Quality Program work and special projects to help meet desired outcomes.

- **Oregon Water Quality Standards** – Oregon DEQ
  Defines point and nonpoint source regulation under Oregon law.

Key Topic #6: Your Best Management Practices for NPS

Learning Objectives

1. **Identify** common best management practices (BMPs) used to reduce NPS pollution (e.g., rain gardens, cover crops, buffer strips and pervious pavement) and explain how they reduce pollutant loads or improve stormwater infiltration.
2. **Compare** the costs, benefits and feasibility of different BMPs in various land use contexts (e.g., a schoolyard vs. a farm vs. a residential street).
3. **Recommend** appropriate BMPs for a hypothetical site based on field observations, soil conditions and observed pollution risks.

Resources

NCF-Envirothon Resources: See pages 170-203 in the 2026 Envirothon Current Environmental Issue Study Resources guide.

Oregon Resources:

- **Erosion Control Manual** – Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)
  Provides information on erosion prevention and sediment control BMPs for ODOT projects.

- **Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control Planning and Design Manual** – Clean Water Services
  Field-ready BMP designs for construction, development and erosion control.

- **Nonpoint Source Implementation** – Oregon DEQ
  Shows how BMPs are supported by state technical assistance and funding.

- **Oregon Nonpoint Source Management Program Plan (2022-2026)** – Oregon DEQ
  Identifies BMPs for agriculture, forestry and urban areas. (Search for "BMP.")

- **Rain Gardens: Low-Impact Development fact sheet** – OSU Extension
  Explains the benefits of a rain garden and how to create one.

Oregon State Education Standards Related to Nonpoint Source Pollution

Science Standards

Earth & Human Activity

- **HS.ESS3.4**: Evaluate or refine a technological solution that reduces impacts of human activities on climate change and other natural system*s.*

Earth's Systems

- **HS.ESS2.2**: Analyze geoscience data to make the claim that one change to Earth's surface can create feedbacks that cause changes to other Earth's systems.
- **HS.ESS2.5**: Plan and conduct an investigation of the properties of water and its effects on Earth materials and surface processes.

Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy and Dynamics

- **HS.LS2.7**: Design, evaluate and refine a solution for reducing the impacts of human activities on the environment and biodiversity.

Social Studies Standards

Geography

- **HS.42**: Use geographic data to analyze the interconnectedness of physical and human regional systems (such as a river valley and culture, water rights/use in regions, choice/impact of settlement locations) and their interconnectedness to global communities.
- **HS.46**: Assess how changes in the environmental and cultural characteristics of a place or region influence spatial patterns of trade, land use and issues of sustainability.
- **HS.48**: Analyze how humans have used technology to modify the physical environment (e.g., dams, tractor, housing types and transportation systems).
- **HS.49**: Assess the impact of human settlement activities on the environmental and cultural characteristics of specific places and regions.

Human Interaction and Interconnection (in optional, 2024 standards)

- **HS.G.HI.8**: Identify examples of conflict and cooperation involving the use of land and natural resources.

Human-Environmental Interaction (in optional, 2024 standards)

- **HS.G.HE.9**: Explain how technological developments, societal decisions and personal practices influence global resource consumption patterns, conservation and environmental sustainability.
- **HS.G.HE.10**: Evaluate efforts at the local, national or international level to address the use of limited or environmentally harmful resources.
- **HS.G.HE.11**: Identify and describe how the relationship to land, utilization of natural resources, displacement and land ownership affects historically underrepresented identities, cultures, and communities.

OREGON ENVIROTHON

CURRENT ISSUE ORAL PRESENTATION 2026

Nonpoint Source Pollution Mitigation – It Begins at Home!

Background

Clean water is essential for healthy people, communities and ecosystems. Yet about 37% of Oregon's rivers, lakes and streams do not meet state water quality standards. A major cause is **nonpoint source pollution**, which comes from many scattered sources that are hard to manage, unlike pollution from sources such as wastewater treatment plants or factories. When rain or snowmelt runs over land, it can carry oil, fertilizers, pesticides, soil and other nonpoint source pollutants into nearby waterways. This runoff degrades streams and rivers and harms water quality. It also affects the aquatic habitats of species such as salmon, which rely on clean, cold water to survive.

The **Clean Water Act (CWA)** is the main federal law protecting the nation's waters. One way the CWA helps states reduce nonpoint source pollution is through a process called **Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)**. A TMDL sets the maximum amount of a pollutant a water body can receive while still meeting water quality standards.

In Oregon, the **Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)** manages this TMDL work through the Nonpoint Source Program. Each water body on the state's polluted waters list — known as the 303(d) list or Integrated Report — has a TMDL plan that identifies the sources of pollution and sets limits to reduce it. Under **Section 319 of the CWA**, states also receive grant money for projects that reduce nonpoint source pollution.

Oregon's **Section 319 Nonpoint Source Grant Program** provides project funding to local partners, such as watershed councils or Tribes, to address nonpoint source pollution. Many of these efforts promote **best management practices (BMPs)**, practical methods that reduce runoff and prevent pollutants from entering waterways. Example BMPs include planting vegetation along streams, encouraging residents to grow native plants, managing fertilizer use and maintaining healthy forest cover.

Together, the TMDL process, community organizations implementing BMPs and the Section 319 grant program help Oregon communities protect clean water for people, wildlife and future generations.

Oral Presentation Overview

The local watershed council has hired your team to develop a grant proposal for Oregon DEQ's Section 319 Nonpoint Source Grant Program. Your goal is to design a socially and scientifically grounded project that reduces nonpoint source pollution in your community's watershed or another watershed.

Your Task

Your team's task is to develop a 10-minute oral presentation pitching your Section 319 grant proposal to a review panel of DEQ and watershed council representatives. Your team must:

1. **Define the problem**
   Identify the watershed and the water quality concern your project will address. Describe what human activities may be contributing to the problem and how the problem affects people, wildlife and/or the environment. Use data to show why this issue matters.
2. **Set a goal**
   Identify which pollutant your project aims to reduce, and explain why you selected it.
3. **Describe your proposed solution**
   Propose a project to reduce the nonpoint source pollutant of concern in the chosen watershed. Your project must incorporate at least one best management practice or action (e.g., buffer zone or rain garden) and at least one element of community engagement (e.g., signage, social media, education program or volunteer recruitment). Identify key partners who will help conduct the project, and describe how the project will raise awareness or change behaviors.
4. **Promote equity**
   Show how your project engages with diverse or underserved groups in the watershed to address their needs and value their experiences. (To gain a better understanding of how diverse communities in Oregon interact with water, you can consult the Oregon Water Futures Report, listed in Resources.)
5. **Outline expected results**
   Identify expected results and explain how you will track success.
6. **Provide a simple budget**
   Include a simple budget showing how a Section 319 grant would support your project. Note that projects must provide at least 40% of the total project cost in matching resources (e.g., other grants, donations or volunteer time). In 2025, the average grant awarded was $15,000.

Successful Proposals

We are looking for projects that creatively and realistically address a nonpoint source pollution issue in the chosen watershed. Successful proposals focus on a well-defined project with clear objectives and rationale, and include all six elements outlined above.

See the following table for some sample projects from past proposals. Also see the Oral Presentation Score Sheet for a scoring rubric.

Sample Projects From Past Proposals				
Watershed	**Setting**	**TMDL Goal**	**Best Management Practice**	**Project**
Johnson Creek (Portland Metro)	Urban	Reduce bacteria	Control pet waste	Installing pet-waste stations in public spaces, with signage
South Santiam	Agricultural	Reduce nutrients	Manage fertilizer applications to avoid runoff	Developing a farmer-to-farmer learning network
Upper Rogue	Rural	Temperature control	Restore vegetation to riparian areas	Working with Tribal youth corps for streamside plantings

Resources

Oregon Nonpoint Source Program & Section 319 Grant Programs

- Oregon DEQ Nonpoint Source Program: https://www.oregon.gov/deq/wq/programs/Pages/Nonpoint.aspx
- Oregon Section 319 Nonpoint Source Implementation Grants (2025): https://www.oregon.gov/deq/wq/Documents/nps319rfp2025.pdf
- Oregon DEQ Water Quality Grants: https://www.oregon.gov/deq/wq/programs/pages/wqgrants.aspx
- Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Grant Programs: https://www.oregon.gov/oweb/grants/

Water Quality & TMDL Data

- Oregon DEQ TMDL Program Overview: https://www.oregon.gov/deq/wq/tmdls/

- Integrated Report (303(d) List) Data Viewer: https://www.arcgis.com/apps/instant/sidebar/index.html?appid=7d13b19e01a44f1dbfd12903576e6d29

Community Engagement

- OSU Extension Service Water Program: https://extension.oregonstate.edu/water
- The River Starts Here (Oregon public education campaign toolkit):
- https://theriverstartshere.org/
- SOLVE Oregon (volunteer mobilization and cleanup programs): https://www.solveoregon.org/

Equity

- Oregon DEQ Environmental Justice: https://www.oregon.gov/deq/about-us/Pages/Environmental-Justice.aspx
- Oregon Water Futures Report: https://www.oregonwaterfutures.org/report-20-21

2026

Oregon Envirothon – Oral Presentation Score Sheet

Team Number	Judge's Initials	/100 Total Score

Scoring Criteria
0 = Not at all
1 = Poor or poorly
2 = Fair or slightly well
3 = Good or fairly well
4 = Excellent or very well
5 = Outstanding

Part I – Proposal Background (30 points maximum)

Circle one score for each item

The team demonstrated understanding of:

A.	Characteristics of the project watershed.	0	1	2	3	4	5
B.	The causes of nonpoint source pollution in the watershed.	0	1	2	3	4	5
C.	The water quality problem the project will address.	0	1	2	3	4	5
D.	The human activities that may be contributing to the problem.	0	1	2	3	4	5
E.	Potential impacts of the problem on people, wildlife and the environment.	0	1	2	3	4	5
F.	Data showing why this issue matters.	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Part I Total:						**/30**

Part II – Proposal Details (35 points maximum)

Circle one score for each item

The team outlined:

A.	Their recommended plan for reducing a specified nonpoint source pollutant in the project watershed.	0	1	2	3	4	5
B.	How their plan incorporates at least one suitable best management practice and at least one community engagement strategy.	0	1	2	3	4	5
C.	Key partners that the project will involve, including their roles.	0	1	2	3	4	5
D.	How the project will motivate long-term behavior change.	0	1	2	3	4	5
E.	How the project will address the needs of diverse or underserved populations.	0	1	2	3	4	5
F.	Expected outcomes and how success will be tracked.	0	1	2	3	4	5
G.	A budget showing how grant funds and matching resources will be used. (Projects need to match at least 40% of the total cost.)	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Part II Total:						**/35**

Part III – Quality of Presentation (20 points maximum)

Circle one score for each item

A.	The presentation was well organized, with a clear introduction and strong conclusion.	0	1	2	3	4	5
B.	The participants enhanced the presentation (with eye contact, gestures, voice inflection, originality, professionalism, etc.).	0	1	2	3	4	5
C.	The visual aids were used to make major points and show conclusions. (Visual aids should be correct, eye-catching, readable, neat, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4	5
D.	The presentation had a logical flow, connecting topics with transition statements.	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Part III Total:						**/20**

Part IV – Required Elements (15 points maximum)

Circle one score for each item

A.	References: References and resources were provided or cited in the team presentation.	0	1	2	3	4	5
B.	Participation: Award one point for each team member who participated equally in the presentation.	0	1	2	3	4	5
C.	Time: Award points (as below) to indicate how effectively the team used their allotted time. Time limit is 11:00 minutes. (Teams will be cut off at 11:00 minutes.) 1:00-2:59 min = **1 pt** 3:00-4:59 min = **2 pts** 5:00-6:59 min = **3 pts** 7:00-8:59 min = **4 pts** 9:00-11:00 min = **5 pts** PRESENTATION TIME: _____	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Part IV Total:						**/15**

Tips to Help You with Your Team Presentation

Record a video of your presentation and submit it to Oregon Envirothon, heath@ofri.org, by the due date of **April 17, 2026.**

Some useful tips to consider:

- Properly cite all references referred to in your presentation.
- Presentations are recommended to be 10 minutes in length. (The time limit is 10:59 minutes.)
- All team members should participate approximately equally.
- Plan the best format for your presentation. You may use software (such as PowerPoint), flip charts, props or other visual aids; organize your presentation as a public forum discussion; or use another format.
- Make any text large enough to read from a distance away.
- Judges' scoring is based on content, not the method of delivery.
- Refer to the Oral Presentation Score Sheet for scoring criteria.
- Practice your presentation, including transitions between speakers.
- Make your voice loud, clear and expressive. Try not to speak too rapidly or have constant body movement (which can distract from the content).
- Presentations should have three very recognizable sections: Introduction, Body and Conclusion**.** For example:
    - In the Introduction, have the team leader briefly summarize the problem or plan, state each objective, and name the person who will be presenting each objective.
    - In the Body, clearly outline and explain the information to meet the objectives.
    - In the Conclusion, restate the objectives and conclude with an obvious finish.

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