

North America's future invasive species fighters will come together for Envirothon this July in Ontario

Toronto, ON, June 16, 2016 - Forests Ontario is pleased to announce the Invasive Species Centre has stepped forward as lead sponsor for the 2016 North American Envirothon (NAE), to be held in Peterborough, Ontario this summer. This exciting event will bring together more than 300 of the brightest students from across North America who spent the past year studying this year's Envirothon theme – Invasive Species.

“As a former Envirothon participant and coordinator, I understand the importance of engaging high school youth,” says Tracey Cooke, Executive Director of the Invasive Species Centre. “Our fight against invasive species will become more challenging into the future, and we need a future workforce who will develop the solutions to our environmental challenges. Envirothon is key to building these future leaders, providing them with mentorship and proficiency building workshops, and developing leadership skills including collaboration, problem solving and communication. Envirothon is building the green leaders of tomorrow.”

For more than 30 years, the North American Envirothon, a program of the National Conservation Foundation, has engaged high school youth across North America through regional programs lead by more than 50 state and provincial organizations. Through online resources and in-person workshops, students gain a better understanding of the threats, challenges and management approaches needed to ensure a healthy environment while reducing the impact from invasive species.

“The Envirothon program inspires youth to explore education and careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), all critical in our fight against invasive species,” explains Rob Keen, CEO, Forests Ontario. “As we look to our future generation to discover the answers to our environmental challenges of tomorrow, we need to invest in the talent behind those ideas. Given this year's Envirothon theme, it seemed like a natural fit to collaborate with Invasive Species Centre to educate youth about the impact of invasive species.”

Invasive species are among Canada's greatest threats to our environment, economy and society. In Canada, invasive plants cost the agricultural and forest industries about \$7.3 billion per year through higher operations costs. Increased awareness among the public is essential to lead to better environmental decisions and inspire actions to stop the introduction and spread of invasive species. In addition to supporting NAE, Invasive

Species Centre also builds partnerships and coordinates collaborative projects that educate the public about the impact of invasive species.

This summer, Invasive Species Centre and the Ontario Invasive Plant Council are training teams of citizen scientists to use the EDDMapS application to detect and report invasive species. The Early Detection & Rapid Response (EDRR) Network Ontario, funded by the Ontario Trillium Fund, trains and equips volunteers with the skills and resources needed to better detect and reduce invasive species in Ontario, one community at a time. Interested citizens can sign up to this network at <http://www.invasivespeciescentre.ca/GET-INVOLVED/Join-a-Network>.

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About Forests Ontario

Forests Ontario is the voice for our forests. Working to promote a future of healthy forests sustaining healthy people, Forests Ontario is committed to the re-greening of Ontario through tree planting efforts on rural lands and in urban areas, as well as the renewal and stewardship of Ontario's forests through restoration, education and awareness. Visit www.forestsontario.ca or follow @Forests_Ontario.

About NCF-Envirothon

NCF-Envirothon is a hands-on, environmental problem-solving, leadership development program that includes a competition involving high school students annually throughout North America. Participating teams complete training and testing in five natural resource categories: soils/land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife and current environmental issues. The program combines in-class curriculum and hands-on field experiences to provide a natural resources encounter for students.

For more information on this exciting program see: www.envirothon.org

About the Invasive Species Centre

The Invasive Species Centre is a non-profit organization that connects stakeholders, knowledge and technology to prevent and reduce the spread of invasive species that harm Canada's environment, economy and society.

The Invasive Species Centre works with a broad range of stakeholders to help:

- identify needs for knowledge, tools, and resources;
- coordinate and support projects that contribute to invasive species management;
- build competencies with NGOs, students and new graduates; and
- share information to raise awareness and empower citizens to take action in their communities.

Visit the Invasive Species Centre family of websites at www.invasivespeciescentre.ca and the Invasive Species Centre's social media accounts on Facebook (www.facebook.com/InvasiveSpeciesCentre), Twitter (@InvSp) and LinkedIn.

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The Voice for Ontario's Forests

www.forestsontario.ca

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