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## **STUDENT TEAMS HEAD NORTH TO INTERNATIONAL ENVIROTHON COMPETITION**

WASHINGTON, July 19, 2016 – The top 52 student teams from 44 states, seven Canadian provinces, and China will be competing in Ontario, Canada, from July 24 to 29 for the coveted North American Envirothon title and \$30,000 in cash prizes.

“Envirothon has given more than 10 million people over the last 37 years hands-on experience untangling some of the most pressing natural resources challenges ever faced,” said Steve Robinson, chair of the board of trustees for the National Conservation Foundation (NCF), the nonprofit organization responsible for Envirothon. “This program is not only a way for students to gain practical knowledge and skills – it’s also a powerful vehicle for stewardship and conservation, and the beginning of many careers in natural resources.”

Envirothon, the nation’s largest environmental education program for high school students, helps more than 50,000 young adults each year develop leadership, critical thinking, writing, and speaking skills in addition to a keen understanding of ecology and natural resources management.

Every year, 4,000 private and public high schools help to organize student teams and prepare them for written tests and oral presentations in four areas of environmental science and management: soils, aquatic ecology, forestry, and wildlife. Envirothon’s fifth area of study is chosen on an annual basis.

“This year’s fifth topic is invasive species – one of the top threats to ecosystem diversity and stability in North America,” said Barry Burch, chair of NCF’s Envirothon Operating Committee. “To get this far in the competition, the students headed to Ontario have had to demonstrate time and again their knowledge in invasive species prevention, introduction, impact, and management.”

The top three teams chosen in Ontario will be awarded a total of \$30,000 in cash prizes by Envirothon sponsor Smithfield Foods. Each member of the first place team will receive \$3,000; members of the second place team will go home with \$2,000 each; and the third place team members will receive \$1,000 each.

Smithfield Foods, the world's largest pork producer and processor, started sponsoring Envirothon's cash prizes in 2015. This year, a number of Smithfield employees also volunteered at their local Envirothon competitions in 19 states. The 2016 North American Envirothon is also sponsored by the National Association of Conservation Districts, Forests Ontario, the U.S. Forest Service, Trent University in Ontario, and more. A complete list of Envirothon's sponsors is available at [www.envirothon.org](http://www.envirothon.org).

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The National Association of Conservation Districts is the non-profit organization that represents the nation's 3,000 conservation districts, their state associations and the 17,000 men and women who serve on their governing boards. For more than 70 years, local conservation districts have worked with cooperating landowners and managers of private working lands to help them plan and apply effective conservation practices. For more information about NACD, visit: [www.nacdnet.org](http://www.nacdnet.org).