



Spring 2022

WV Department of Environmental Protection

Message from the director . .

For the first time since 2019 and with fingers tightly crossed, we are planning to host an in-person Youth Environmental Day, Junior Conservation Camp and Youth Conference this year. And you don't know just how thrilled we are to finally be back!

Because of the pandemic, the Youth Environmental Program has had to reinvent itself and find non-traditional ways to connect with all of you. But nothing replaces the benefits of face-to-face interaction with our 4-H clubs, scout troops, school groups, campers, conference participants and everyone else associated with the YEP. Developing those relationships through our core events is the foundation of this program.

So, remember to mark your calendars. Youth Environmental Day is set for May 21 at North Bend State Park. Junior Conservation Camp, for ages 11-14, is scheduled for June 20-24 at Cedar Lakes in Ripley. The deadline to sign up for both events is May 1. The Youth Environmental Conference, for ages 13-18, is making a stop at Twin Falls State Park in Wyoming County on October 7-9. We will release more information on that event later.

For more information about Youth Day and Junior Conservation camp, visit the YEP page on the Department of



Annette Hoskins
YEP Director

Environment and Natural Resources

See MESSAGE, Page 4

Happy 25th!



Students test their knowledge in wildlife, soils, forestry and aquatics at the state Envirothon event.

West Virginia Envirothon still going strong

High school teams have until March 15 to enter this year

By Beth Henry-Vance

High school students are encouraged to join a hands-on environmental competition that offers more than \$22,000 in scholarships and awards — plus memories that last a lifetime.

The West Virginia Envirothon event will be celebrating 25 years when it takes place April 21 to 22 at Cacapon Resort State Park in Morgan County.

“It is 25 years of the Envirothon, which really is amazing,” said West Virginia Envirothon Chairman Wayne McKeever. “It’s amazing to think of 25 years, and how many students we’ve had come to the Envirothon.”

McKeever also said Cacapon Resort is a great venue and he is thrilled to bring back in-person competition for the high school teams. West Virginia Envirothon was hosted virtually in 2021 and it was canceled in 2020 because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The National Envirothon also was canceled that year.



Cacapon Resort State Park is this year's host.

The Envirothon competition is the largest environmental skills competition in North America. The program features outdoor stations on the topics of wildlife, soils, forestry and aquatics, as well as a “fifth topic” oral presentation theme that changes each year.

The two-day competition allows students to meet with biologists, foresters, soil scientists and other professionals on the first day to get a feel for what each station will cover. On the second day, teams put their knowledge to the test.

Teams are made of five students and an

See 25TH, Page 4



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YEP News

WV Youth Environmental Program
601 57th St. S.E., Charleston WV 25304

News from across the state

Northeastern

Susan Parker
Coordinator



THINK Spring! Spring is the best time of year to really enjoy nature. I encourage you to make a plan now for an environmental day with your family or group.

Plan to get outdoors this spring and show Mother Nature some love. A great activity to participate in is our Make It Shine cleanup, scheduled for April 1-16. The deadline to sign up for a cleanup is March 11. For an application, visit dep.wv.gov and type "Make It Shine" in the search bar



Girl Scout troops 40139 and 14029 of Hardy County have been busy working on their environment advocate service patches.

The groups focused their October meeting on learning about the three R's (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle). Along with other activities, they took a recycling pledge and decided to plan a recycling collection drive. At their December meeting, the group held a very successful recycling drive, collecting paper, cardboard, plastics (#1, #2), and aluminum cans.

They also collected pop tabs to go to the



Ronald McDonald House Charities. The girls took part in a water education program, learning about point and nonpoint source pollution with the WVDEP Enviroscope model (photo above).

The groups plan to continue their effort this spring with a Make It Shine cleanup at a local park. Feel free to reach out to me to schedule some spring activities and don't forget to send in your summary reports this month.

There's still time to submit report

If you or your club, school or troop is still contemplating filing a summary report for this year, it's not too late.

Nor is it too late to submit an essay, poster, hall of fame application or Vecellio Scholarship application to the Youth Environmental Program.

The deadline for filing is March 15 and more than \$15,000 in cash awards will be given out.

The summary report highlights activities and projects your club, school or troop has completed since March 16, 2021. There are multiple ways you can file your report. There is an electronic submission option, as well as a fillable form available that can be submitted through regular mail or email.

To access this information about the YEP awards program, go to: <https://dep.wv.gov/environmental-advocate/YEP/Documents/YEPfolderwebLink.pdf>.

To file a report electronically, go to: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfTfos6P-o7P8_cnUFlu28JBzSoSa8UFuJ30dMMHjd14IW2mw/viewform.

YEP award winners will be honored at Youth Day, set for May 21 at North Bend State Park.

Central

Beth Henry-Vance
Coordinator



STUDENTS at Midland Elementary School in Elkins have been able to make a positive difference for pollinators through a gardening project.

A pollinator garden featuring a mix of plants for spring and fall has allowed students to take part in the planting process, while also learning about bees, fertilizers, soil, the life cycle of plants and more.

Sarah Wamsley, a fourth-grade teacher at the school, received a \$1,000 grant through the West Virginia Beekeeping Association in the spring of 2020. The project started as a miniature garden planted inside small, reused bookcases.

Since then, the garden has grown into two larger beds with a variety of plants that are beneficial to the environment and visually pleasing. Students also created a monarch waystation, and they are building birdhouses to place around the garden this



spring.

Some classes have learned about caterpillar life cycles, migration and monarch population decline. Students even created essays to show "what we as human beings can do" to find ways to help improve monarch habitats.

The pollinator garden has supported what the students learn in the classroom, while also showing them that they can make positive changes in the environment and have fun.

Southeastern

Sara Prior
Coordinator



FOUNDED 12 years ago as the New River Gorge Learning Co-op, Mountain State Montessori (MSM) in Fayette County has grown into a thriving and essential part of the community.

The school is enrolled in the Youth Environmental Program and has always taught its students to look at their role in the world and how to take action.

MSM provides students many ways to be active in taking care of the earth. The students stay busy by recycling, composting, installing pollinator gardens, maintaining beehives and volunteering at various events throughout their community.

Parent volunteers and community members are vital to the success of these programs and the students are learning valuable lessons about cooperation and teamwork. Staff and students of MSM are environmental stewardship champions! I recently heard about their latest project, the

Farm School Program. This program incorporates STEM lessons and hands-on learning, while teaching the true meaning of environmental and community stewardship.

Teacher Erin Stewart brought her experience of farming and gardening to the school three years ago and established the Farm School Program last year.

She has taught her students how to conduct soil tests, set up rain barrels for water conservation and helped grow their composting efforts. Students learned the process of plant propagation and will be putting in a large vegetable garden this spring.

From installing fencing to using power tools, the students are learning first-hand the hard work it takes to farm. A goal of this program is to partner with local organizations to fulfill the needs of the community.

Southwestern

Tom Aluise
Coordinator



WEBERWOOD Elementary School teacher Tiffany Pace has dipped into the resources offered by the Youth Environmental Program to enlighten her students on STEM topics.

But the third grade teacher also thinks globally when it comes to her class. Pace has included regular, virtual lessons and interactions with a class at a school in Nicaragua.



Pace

“We really enjoy partnering with them,” she told the Charleston Gazette-Mail. “Their students and our students have Zoom conferences, where we talk about STEM and science projects and how they work on a global level. They find out we’re more alike than different and all have to work together, because we’re all on the same planet.”

Pace’s innovative teaching methods have not gone unno-

ticed.

She was recently named the recipient of a 2022 Presidential Award of Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. It is the highest award kindergarten through 12th grade math and science teachers can receive from the U.S. government.

Pace was among 117 teachers, mentors and organizations around the U.S. who received the award. It was announced by President Joe Biden on Feb. 8.

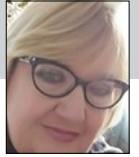
Pace, who will receive \$10,000 as part of the award, said she was stunned by the news.

“I had to read it twice, because I didn’t believe it,” she told the Gazette-Mail. “The students knew I was a finalist. The process started two years ago, but it was delayed because of the COVID-19 situation.”

Pace was recognized during a virtual ceremony from the White House on Feb. 24.

Northwestern

Debbie Florence
Coordinator



ANGLERS along the Ohio River at the Belleville Locks and Dam and Belleville Hydroelectric Facility will notice a new addition to their favorite fishing hole.

Recently, the Belleville 4-H Club installed monofilament recycling bins to collect used fishing line for recycling. Most monofilament is not biodegradable, so when it is not disposed of properly, it remains in the environment, creating a hazard for boaters and wildlife. Birds and waterfowl are particularly vulnerable to entanglement in this type of litter.


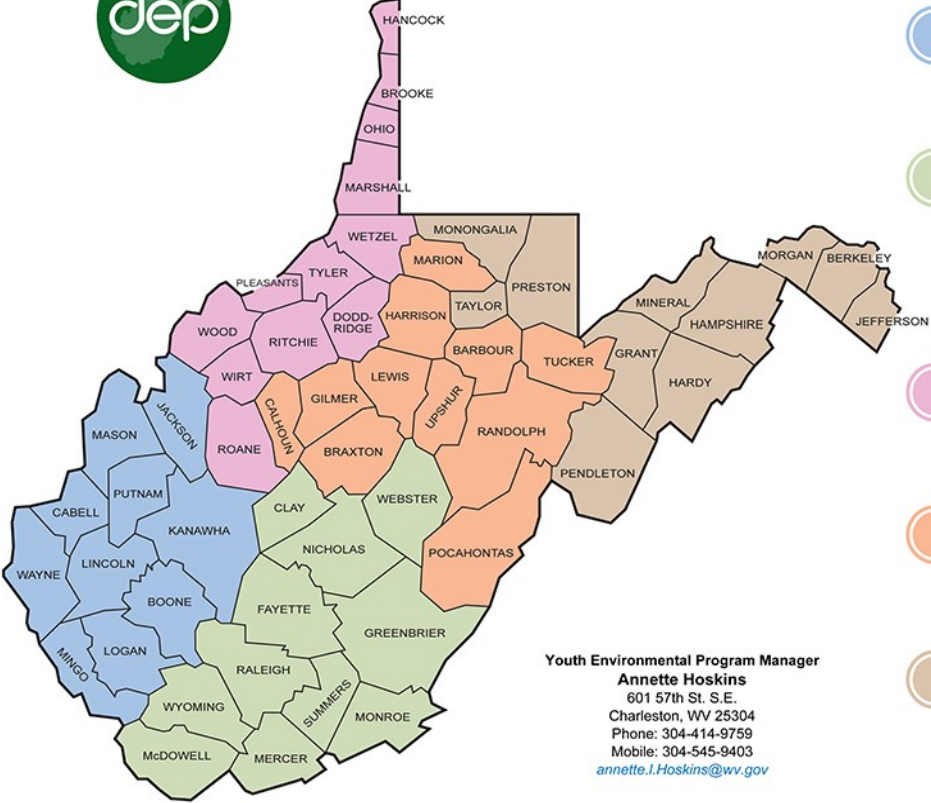
The project was a big undertaking and required a lot of effort in research, hours of construction and legwork to gain permission to install the bins once complete.

Despite supply shortages, which delayed the project, the club was able to finish and install two collection canisters in time for warmer weather and the increase in recreational fishing it brings to this spot. The club designed the



bins based on a video posted at <https://www.boatus.org/monofilament/>, a website for Boat US. Each unit costs approximately \$70 to build. Club members will monitor the bins and collect line. Once collected, the line is mailed to Berkley Fishing, a fishing gear company, which handles the recycling as part of its conservation efforts.

west virginia department of environmental protection

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Spotlight on.



Belleville 4-H Club

Location: Wood County

Number of members: 44

This club exemplifies “hands to larger service.” It stages litter cleanups in both the spring and fall and for many years has organized an annual community drop-off event in which it collects large items, recyclables, tires and hazardous household items like paint. Recycling takes on a deeper meaning when the club collects old Christmas cards and uses them to make new cards that bring cheer and smiles to nursing home residents and deployed soldiers. The group also plants and maintains several flower beds in the area and has a heart for wildlife. The club encourages bird feeding and found a fun way to spend snow days this past year by building snow cakes decorated with yummy treats for wildlife.



March 15 — Deadline for YEP reports, posters, scholarship applications, Hall of Fame nominations and essays.

April 4-17 — West Virginia Make It Shine statewide cleanup.

April 20 — Earth Day Celebration at Clay Center in Charleston.

April 22 — International observance of Earth Day.

April 23 — Adopt-A-Highway spring cleanup.

May 21 — Youth Environmental Day at North Bend State Park.

June 13-17 — WV Senior Conservation Camp at Camp Caesar, Cowen.

June 20-24 — WV Junior Conservation Camp at Cedar Lakes, Ripley.

August 6 — Adopt-A-Highway appreciation picnic.

** For more information about Make It Shine and Adopt-A-Highway events, call: 1-800-322-5530.*

25TH

Continued from Page 1

advisor. High schools, FFA clubs, 4-H clubs and home-school groups are encouraged to form a team and register for the competition. The registration deadline is March 15.

“It’s been three years since the last one (took place in person) so that’s what I’m excited about, it actually being hands-on again, outside. It’s wonderful,” McKeever said.

He added that he hopes more teachers and youth group leaders will consider bringing a team to Envirothon, because there are so many benefits and awards.

Participants can win several scholarships, with the first-place team receiving \$5,000. Teams placing second through fifth also earn scholarships, while there are additional awards for the best per-

“All of the kids who’ve ever participated, whether they win or not, they love it.”

**— Wayne McKeever
Envirothon
chairman**

formance at each station, attendance and the highest score by a “rookie” team.

The participants learn a lot of hands-on science activities and problem-solving skills, McKeever noted. They also get to travel to different parts of the state, since the competition venue normally changes every two years.

Plus, McKeever said past par-

ticipants have shared how much they enjoyed being part of Envirothon.

“All of the kids who’ve ever participated, whether they win or not, they love it,” he said.

Stipends are available for advisors, and many teams receive support from their local conservation district to cover travel and lodging.

Educational materials and training videos are available on the Envirothon website at www.wvca.us/envirothon. Anyone with questions about how to register can contact Heather Duncan by email at hduncan@wvca.us or by calling 304-433-6280 as soon as possible.

The winners of the West Virginia Envirothon will compete at the 2022 national competition, scheduled for July 24 to 30 near Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

MESSAGE

Continued from Page 1

Environmental Protection’s web site (dep.wv.gov) or give me or a YEP coordinator a call.

Speaking of our coordinators, we have instituted a change in the way we cover the state. Instead of six YEP coordinators, we now have five, which means your county might have a new YEP representative. You can see the realigned county coverage areas on Page 3 of this newsletter.

If you have a new district coordinator, you’ll likely hear from them soon.

Of course, none of these changes will impact our commitment to serving the youth of West Virginia, nor hinder our efforts in carrying out the mission of the YEP.