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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MS Envirothon Team places 5th at International event

RALEIGH, NC — The Mississippi Envirothon team placed fifth at the National Conservation Foundation, or NCF-Envirothon, and placed first in the Current Issues category at the international competition, held the week of July 28-Aug. 3, 2019, on the North Carolina State University Campus in Raleigh.

Fifty-three teams, from the United States, China, and Canada competed this year, with 500 students, advisors and guests attending the event. The Mississippi Envirothon team received a \$1,250 scholarship from Idaho Envirothon that will be divided among the five team members, and they received a plaque for the highest score in Current Issues with a score of 94.5, which was 21 points more than the Pennsylvania first-place team scored in the same category.

The teams are judged in six categories – Aquatics, Forestry, Soils, Wildlife, Current Events and Oral Presentation. The maximum score for the first five categories is 100 points; the maximum score for the Oral Presentation is 200 points.

The top five winning teams and the overall scores were: Pennsylvania (567.17); Virginia (566.83); North Carolina (562.17); New York (561.00); and Mississippi (559.17). Only eight points separated the first place Pennsylvania team from Mississippi's fifth-place Envirothon team, so the competition was fierce. "The Mississippi team did an exceptional job taking on the challenges of the NCF-Envirothon International competition," Envirothon Coordinator Chelsey Gazaway said. "Placing fifth and also receiving the highest Current Issue score is a major accomplishment. The team studied hard and also had great trainers along the way." Gazaway, a Staff Officer for Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission, is responsible for organizing and coordinating the Mississippi Envirothon. She conducts workshops during the school year to prepare teachers and advisors to train teams for the event.

"I am so proud of these kids," Mississippi Envirothon Team Advisor Amy Rosen said. "Everything they have achieved was earned through hard work and dedication. They constantly amaze me, and we are looking forward to another great year."

In order to progress to NCF-Envirothon Competition, Oxford High School Team A placed first in the State Envirothon, held April 26, 2019, at the FFA Center in Raymond, MS. This is the 11th time in the past 12 years that the Oxford team has won the State Envirothon Competition and represented the state at the International Envirothon competition.

Mississippi Envirothon, a program of the Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission and supported by Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts, is a hands-on competition designed to challenge students in grades 9 through 12 to explore natural resources. Competitors

are tested in the categories of: aquatic ecology, forestry, soils/land use, wildlife, and a current environmental issue.

The 2019 area competitions included 53 student teams, 288 students in the competition, and 45 teacher advisors on-site who worked with the teams to prepare for Mississippi Envirothon.

Through local soil and water conservation districts, more than 125 volunteers and resource personnel from state and federal natural resource agencies and organizations worked with educators, sharing environmental expertise to prepare the teams for the competitions.

In intensive preparation for the competitions, students received hands-on assistance from the experts, who tested and judged the area competitions, and assisted at the statewide competition. The Mississippi Envirothon is funded through grants from the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Chevron. Scholarships are funded by Georgia-Pacific Monticello Mill.

PHOTO CUTLINE: The MISSISSIPPI ENVIROTHON TEAM accepts a scholarship check from Tamra Cikaitoga (at left) of the Idaho Envirothon. Mississippi Envirothon Team members (left to right) are: Claire Cizdziel, Sienna Cizdziel, Gillian Meyers, Emma Teng and Anna Kang. NCF Executive Gene Schmidt is on the right. PHOTO BY CHELSEY GAZAWAY, MSWCC ENVIROTHON COORDINATOR

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