

Rockland Envirothon Entry Wins Secretary's Award for Excellence in Energy and Environmental Education

The Rockland High School Environmental Club and Envirothon team, coached by Angela Armstrong, has accomplished a diverse list of environmental benefits in their community in just a few short years. Following a national award (NEED project) for their work on energy efficiency education, the club has revived the school's recycling program, and initiated a composting program in the cafeteria to generate soil for their school garden where they work all summer to grow food that they then sell at the Southpoint farmer's market. Through their efforts, the team is educating their peers and the greater Rockland community about environmental awareness.

The Massachusetts Envirothon Steering Committee nominates the Rockland High School Environmental Club for the Secretary's Award for Excellence in Energy and Environmental Education based on their work for the 2018 MA Envirothon Community Awards and for their continued regular efforts to reduce our overall environmental impact. Their gentle but consistent pressure to improve composting efforts at Envirothon workshops and events has pushed the committee to take steps to reduce our waste and use less harmful products. They even bring communal lunch fixings to workshops so they are generating less packaging!

The Mass Envirothon Community Research Award recognizes teams who have done thorough and wide-ranging community investigations in preparation for their Current Issue presentation. Qualifying for this award in 2018 required teams to become acquainted with several examples of "gray" and "green" water infrastructure at work in their community. They also investigated local organizations involved in water resource protection, and interviewed engineers, activists, local officials, and natural resource managers to learn about their current work and identify key issues. In addition, the teams used maps and researched local newspapers and the internet.

The Rockland team discovered that their town lies at the headwaters of the North/South

Rivers watershed and felt some responsibility for insuring water quality for downstream communities.

Beyond their initial investigations, the team focused their research on evaluating stormwater runoff and

looking for ways to improve treatment. The team's research impressed town officials, who provided guidance to put their findings into action.

Rockland High School also qualified for a Massachusetts Envirothon Community Action Award which recognizes teams who take what they learn in their research and apply it in service to their community. The team helped the town with its obligations under a Phase II NPDES MS4 permit issued by the USEPA. Specifically, they sampled 10 stormwater outfalls during dry and wet weather flows, testing for all the parameters required under the permit as well as several others of concern. The data from their work will be used in the Town's annual report to the EPA. In addition, the students evaluated a recently installed bio-retention basin on the grounds of the new middle school, which was designed to remove stormwater pollutants before discharging into the waterway. The students determined the system was not being properly maintained and is no longer functioning to detain or pre-treat runoff. In both these instances, the team's volunteer research has helped the town to meet its unfunded regulatory obligations without cutting services elsewhere. [A video of the team's report to the town Select Board may be found at beginning here, at minute 11:30.](#)

Envirothon teams gain strong environmental knowledge and community connections through their community experiences. They develop teamwork skills and stewardship values. They show that they are capable of college level work and that they can make a real contribution to their communities. Their coaches deserve special commendation for the time and care they put into working with the team. Thank you for your support of the Rockland High School team and their coach!