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**News Release**

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**Carmichaels Envirothon Team honored for impressive 2018**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WAYNESBURG, PA – The Greene County Conservation District honored thirteen recipients during its annual awards ceremony on Dec. 12 at Valley View Farm in Waynesburg.

One of the recipients was the Carmichaels Area High School Envirothon Team, the 2018 State Champions.

Accepting the honor at the ceremony were team members Joey Kurincak, Jacob Hair, Ryan Swartz, Stephan Zacoï and Christina Adams, and team advisors Kevin Willis and Megan Patton. The team finished 18<sup>th</sup> at the International Championship after winning the local and state competitions.

The team won the 2018 Greene County Envirothon with score of 475 out of a possible 500. They went on to compete in and win the Pennsylvania Envirothon with a score of 546 out of a possible 600. This was the first time that a team from southwestern Pennsylvania has won the Pennsylvania Envirothon since 1995.

After winning the State Championship, Mr. Willis and the team immediately set their attention to preparing for the International Envirothon in Pocatello, Idaho. This was a major challenge as all of their preparation up to this point was based on the Mid-Atlantic region. These students needed to learn as much as they could about the Intermountain West in the short time they had to prepare.

They rose to this challenge, competing in Idaho and earning a very respectable 18<sup>th</sup> place. With a score of 554.5 out of 700, this team missed the top ten by only 13.5 points. Their highest score was in Forestry with a 93 out of 100.

Mr. Willis has a long history with the Greene County Envirothon that dates back to his own days as a student competitor in 1989, 1990 and 1991. In the latter two years, his team won the Greene County Envirothon and placed 11<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respectively at the Pennsylvania Envirothon. He continued to be involved with the Envirothon while pursuing teaching as a major at Penn State University.

By 1997, Mr. Willis was back in Greene County, teaching at Carmichaels and advising students in the Greene County Envirothon. Under his guidance, Carmichaels Envirothon teams have had great success at the county, state and now the international Envirothons.

In 2015, the Conservation District recognized Mr. Willis's dedication to environmental education.

Carmichaels teams have won the Greene County Envirothon in 1999, 2001 and each year from 2003 through 2018. At the Pennsylvania Envirothon, Carmichaels teams have placed in the top five, nine years in a row and the top ten for thirteen years in a row.

While presenting the award to the team at the ceremony, Lisa Snider, director of the county Conservation District, said she was "very proud" to introduce the team and recognize their hard work.

"Not only have they earned accolades in the Envirothon competitions but they have increased their understanding of the natural world and our role as its stewards," she said. "I am encouraged by them because I know that they will go on to make wise decisions and carry on the legacy of conservation."

To show its appreciation, the Conservation District presented each team member with photo books that highlights their journey from the Greene County Envirothon, through the Pennsylvania Envirothon and to the International Envirothon.

"We hope that these will serve as a pleasant reminder of your Envirothon experience and bring back many fond memories," Snider said.

The Greene County Commissioners, who were in attendance for the ceremony, commended the team for its impressive achievements in 2018.

"We are proud of the hard work and dedication of these fine students who greatly represented Greene County in the State and International Championships," Commissioner Blair Zimmerman. "They certainly are role models for other youths who are aspiring to conserve our planet's valuable resources."

"This award is a fitting testament to not only the perseverance and commitment of the students but also to the leadership of Mr. Willis and the other advisors and the support of the Carmichaels Area School District," said Commissioner Dave Coder.

"We applaud the team members for their impressive achievements and accolades in 2018, and we couldn't be more proud of their passion for such a great program that encourages conservation," said Commissioner Archie Trader.

Other recipients of awards at the ceremony included:

- Sarah Calvert, recipient of the Outstanding Conservation Speaker Award;
- Cumberland Township, Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program Municipality of the Year;
- Curt Hughes, Outstanding Cooperator of the Year recipient;
- Sierra Pettit and Rodney Parson, Special Recognition FFA American Degree recipients;
- The West Greene FFA National Livestock Judging Team, which finished in first place at the State FFA Summer Convention and third place at the 2018 National FFA Convention; which includes: Savannah Pettit, Courtney Ross, Averie Berdine, and Makenzie Thomas;
- Archie Trader, Greene County Commissioner and Conservation District Board Member, who was awarded for 10 years of service as a Conservation District Board Member;
- Jim Cowell, Vice Chairman, who was awarded for 15 years of service as a Conservation District Board Member;
- Glodenna Halstead, who was awarded for five years as an Associate Conservation District Board Member;
- Gay Thistle, who was awarded for five years as an Associate Conservation District Board Member;
- Jared Zinn, who was awarded for five years of service as a district employee (Watershed Specialist); and
- Zack Basinger, who was awarded for five years as a district employee (Environmental Program Specialist).

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Envirothon Team Pic

Pictured with Greene County Commissioners Archie Trader, Blair Zimmerman and Dave Coder are members of the Carmichaels Envirothon Team: Team Advisors Megan Patton and Kevin Willis, and team members Jacob Hair, Ryan Swartz, Stephan Zaco, Joey Kurincak and Christina Adams. The team won the State Envirothon Championship and finished 18<sup>th</sup> at the International Championship.