

Competition to crown young eco-champs

Students from across the region will have a chance to put their environmental knowledge to the test in the Manitoba Envirothon in Clearwater next Wednesday.

The Manitoba Envirothon is a program of the Manitoba Forestry Association that provides high school students the opportunity to learn about the environment in a positive, unique, challenging and practical manner.

The community of Clearwater and the Harvest Moon Society are hosting the May 5 regional event. The Pembina Valley Conservation District is acting as the organizational host with the help of local volunteers, conservation districts

and NGO groups.

Students will meet at the Harvest Moon Society facility in the former Clearwater School and will receive training from specialists in aquatics, forestry, wildlife and soil sciences. They will then compete in a two part competition.

The regional event will feature a mini-envirothon competition tailored specifically to the region's unique environmental challenges while encompassing the broader Manitoba Envirothon approach.

At the Clearwater site, the emphasis will be on the effect of surface water on our ground water sources.

Given that the community's

water depends on a deep well, an issue to be addressed is what possible sources of pollution might create problems with the water's quality.

And what would have to be done to safeguard the quality of the community's water?

Students competing in this competition are using the Pembina Valley Conservation District's watershed management plan as a source document. They have also been given other information which will inform them of related issues.

The success of the Manitoba Envirothon has seen the competition grow from just 11 teams 14 years

ago, to over 30 teams registered so far this year.

The regional competition is a trial run for future years. The lead teams, starting next year, will compete provincially.

At the provincials, teams of five high school students test their environmental knowledge in the five different theme areas - forestry, wildlife, aquatic ecology, soils and land use and a different environmental topic each year. The 2010 theme topic is "Protection of Groundwater".

The provincial envirothon consists of an outdoor trail test and an oral challenge.

Teams traverse a trail with sta-

tion stops that pose questions related to each of the themes. Stops are timed, and teamwork is critical to success.

After the trail test, students are presented with the theme question - a challenge that requires them to bring their collective knowledge together in a multimedia presentation that they will deliver to a panel.

The combined trail test and oral presentation score determines the winning team that will represent Manitoba at the Canon Envirothon in California this July. The Canon Envirothon is North America's largest high school environmental education competition.