

North Carolina high school students find careers at environmental workshop

RALEIGH – North Carolina high schools students participated in the 50th annual Resource Conservation Workshop last week in Wake County. Soil and water conservation district boards statewide chose 93 students to participate in the workshop based on demonstrated conservation interests. Scientists, foresters, biologists, wetland specialists, wildlife experts and engineers provided classroom instruction and outdoor study in the environmental sciences. Students also received information and insight into careers in natural resource management.

Students spend the week digging into a multitude of resource conservation topics and begin to find the threads that connect the ideas together. “At first I thought of soil as plain old dirt! I didn’t have a great understanding or respect for soil, but after the first hour of the workshop I learned that if it wasn’t for soil, I or anything else wouldn’t be here!” commented Shakera, a student from the coastal plain. Concepts were reinforced throughout the week and brought together in a culminating activity with students devising land-use plans.

The celebration of 50 years of this workshop reinforced the commitment by the numerous workshop instructors to provide engaging, hands-on activities for students to explore their profession. “How many opportunities do kids get to explore so many different career fields in one week?” asked Kevin Pittman, a long-time Resource Conservation Workshop teacher and educational forest ranger with the N.C. Division of Forest Resources at Clemmons Educational State Forest in Clayton.

The Resource Conservation Workshop scholarships and cash awards are given to students with the top five scores from Friday’s written exam. In addition, all counselors nominated one student to be interviewed by a panel of judges. Students with the top two interview scores earned the Grady Lane and District Employees Association Scholarships.

The following students received scholarships and/or cash awards:

- Julie Fulk, of Stokes County, received a \$1,000 District Employees Association Scholarship.
- Deirdre “Danny” An, of Mecklenburg County, received the \$500 Grady Lane Scholarship and a \$100 cash award.
- Allie Dinwiddie, of Haywood County, received a \$500 Resource Conservation Workshop Scholarship and a \$100 cash award.
- James Rush, of Guilford County, received a \$275 Resource Conservation Workshop Scholarship and a \$100 cash award.
- Julie Fulk, of Stokes County received a \$100 Resource Conservation Workshop Scholarship.
- Kayla Mounce, of Wilkes County, received a \$75 Resource Conservation Workshop Scholarship.
- Robert Reilly, of Harnett County, received a \$50 Resource Conservation Workshop Scholarship.

Study locations for the workshop included N.C. State University and the University’s Lake Wheeler Research Farm, Clemmons Educational State Forest and Falls Lake State Recreation Area. An award ceremony was held last week at the McKimmon Center for Extension and Continuing Education at N.C. State University in Raleigh.

Instructors and judges came from the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources; N.C. State University’s Continuing Education and Professional Development Center; soil and water conservation districts in Wake, Johnston and Durham counties; U.S. Department of Agricultural Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The workshop is sponsored and organized by the N.C. Division of Soil and Water Conservation, the N.C. Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Hugh Hammond Bennett Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society and N.C. State University’s Soil Science Department and the McKimmon Center for Extension and Continuing Education.