



VILAS COUNTY  
LAND AND WATER  
CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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*2005 Land & Water Conservation and Environmental Awareness Speaking Contest winners*

Six Northland Pines Middle School 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> graders from Mrs. Kadulski's class, and nearly one hundred 7<sup>th</sup> grade students including twelve finalists from Mrs. Weber's class, participated in the *2005 Vilas County Conservation and Environmental Awareness Speaking Contest* this October. On Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, at the Northland Pines Middle School, 18 of these students competed in the final judging event for the speaking contest. The purpose of the contest is to heighten students' environmental awareness and understanding for the conservation of natural resources such as soil, water, energy, air, minerals, wildlife, and forests. The event is also an opportunity for students to hone their presentation skills and practice the art of public speaking. The speaking contest is sponsored by the Vilas County Land and Water Conservation Committee working with the UW-Extension youth development agent Nancy Anne Livingston and local teachers.

2005 participants spoke on topics ranging from pests like Eurasian water milfoil and purple loosestrife, to wildlife subjects on West Nile virus, CWD, wetlands, muskellunge ecology, and timber wolves, to environmental themes exploring gas consumption, nuclear/toxic waste, *Blastomycosis*, and renewable resources. Judges for the event were impressed with the organization of the speeches and by the overall high quality of the student presentations.

"The students had speeches that were well-crafted from beginning to end, and loaded with interesting information about their topic; hats off to the students and teachers for their hard work and commitment to learning about wildlife and environmental issues important to Vilas County and beyond," said one judge, Mariquita Sheehan, a WDNR employee from Phelps. "The students did an exceptional job with their speeches; every student should be congratulated for their effort," said Maynard Bedish, another judge who helped with the event and a member of the Vilas County Land and Water Conservation Committee. Speeches were given in two divisions - the elementary division (grades 5 and 6) and the junior division (grades 7 and 8). Trophies were awarded to the top three students in each division. Certificates and pins were presented to everyone who took part in the event.

In the elementary division, first place was awarded to Alley Meier for her speech entitled "*There's a fungus among us!*"; Kaitlin Nellessen earned second place for her speech describing the fluctuating water levels in Vilas County this summer with her speech "*Radical changes in water levels!*"; and third place went to Duane Heikkinen for his speech exploring the biology and social implications of West Nile virus called "*The facts about West Nile virus!*". First place in the junior division went to Rachel Grider for her speech investigating "*Blastomycosis*," second place went to Jessie Beckett for her speech reviewing muskellunge fishing entitled "*Big Fish!*"; and Destry Bunnell placed third for her speech entitled "*Wolf Awareness!*", challenging folks to rethink their perception of wolves in the Northwoods.

The first-place winners in each division advance to the area speaking competition held at the Wausau School Forest on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2005. The area contest includes conservation speech winners from eight other counties in the North Central region of Wisconsin.

Anyone interested in additional information about the speaking contest can contact Patrick Goggin, county conservationist with the Vilas County Land and Water Conservation Department, via e-mail < [pagogg@co.vilas.wi.us](mailto:pagogg@co.vilas.wi.us) > or by telephone at (715)-479-3747.

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Pictured from (l) to (r) are the winners of the elementary division: Duane Heikkinen (third place); Alley Meier (first place); and Kaitlin Nellesen (second place) and their teacher Mrs. Darleen Kadulski.



Pictured from (l) to (r) are the winners of the junior division: Rachel Grider (first place); Jessie Beckett (second place); and Destry Bunnell (third place); not pictured is their teacher Mrs. Laura Weber.



Pictured are the Northland Pines Middle School 7th grade participants including:  
Rachel Grider; Courtney Harvey; Helen Chang; Chase Kresl; Steven Thompson; Cody McNeil;  
Jessie Beckett; Peter Sharrow; Michaela Wait; Destry Bunnell; Taylor Ridderbusch; Cathryn Sawalski.