

Even though it was a chilly 50°F, the Eastern Panhandle Conservation District (EPCD) held its first annual Earth Day 5K and 1 Mile Fun Walk at Cacapon State Park in Berkeley Springs, WV on April 22, Earth Day. The event was co-coordinated by Suzy Lucas, WVCA Conservation Specialist, and Kate Yohn, EPCD Education Outreach Specialist; with assistance provided by Renee Fincham, Cacapon State Park Activities Coordinator and Naturalist. The purpose of the 5K and 1 Mile Fun Walk was to provide a fun atmosphere with environmentally friendly activities which encouraged people to get active on Earth Day. All of the proceeds raised from the event will benefit eastern panhandle high school students who wish to participate in the *WV Envirothon Contest.

**The Envirothon Contest is a conservation education program and competition for students in grades 9 through 12. Each year EPCD sponsors high school students from the District to attend the WV State Envirothon Contest. Along with sponsoring students and coaches to attend the state contest, EPCD also provides two training workshops each year at Cacapon State Park; one in the spring and fall.*

There were 42 dedicated runners who came to Cacapon State Park and ran the first annual EPCD Earth Day 5K. The race began at 10am, with the starting line located at the park entrance. Mile one took runners on the main road of the park, past the Nature Center, and up a slight incline towards the Middle Fork Cabin Area loop. In the second mile, runners circled the cabin area and headed back downhill. The third and final mile, offered a slight break as most of it was downhill and gave way to a view of the finish line. The entire course showed off Cacapon State Park and all of the beautiful scenery it has to offer.

The first individual to cross the finish line, with a time of 17.17, was Andrew Allstadt of Boyce, VA who received 1st place in the Overall Male category. Receiving 1st place in the Overall Female category was Marie Drexler from Baltimore, MD, with a time of 26.29.9. In honor of Earth Day, category winners received an authentic polymer clay medal engraved with EPCD's logo.

In between the race and the awards ceremony, participants had the opportunity to participate in one of two Earth Day Activities. Ben Alexandro of the Cacapon Institute offered "Stream Dr.", an activity in which participants explored stream anatomy and health. Lou Scavnicky, Opequon Creek Project Team, and Clark Dixon, Jefferson County Master Gardeners, presented "For the Birds". In this activity, participants created a bird feeder out of recycled water bottles and twigs.

The first annual EPCD Earth Day 5K commenced with an Awards Ceremony where 1st through 3rd place winners were recognized in each category. For complete race results, please visit www.wvca.us/districts/?page=epcd.

EPCD would like to thank all of the runners, walkers, family members, and volunteers who came out to Cacapon State Park on Sunday to support the Earth Day 5K. It was a successful event and we look forward to next year!

