



Youth Unite to Fight Species Decline! Philippe Cousteau’s EarthEcho International Announces the Ten Finalist Student Teams to Take on the *OurEcho Challenge*

Washington, DC (June 22, 2020) [EarthEcho International](#), the global nonprofit founded on the belief that youth have the power to change our planet, today announced the ten middle school teams advancing to the finals of the [OurEcho Challenge](#), a new competition designed to engage young problem solvers in understanding, valuing and protecting the diversity of species essential to life. The competition is made possible through the support of Aramco Americas.

“The EarthEcho team is proud and excited to introduce these dedicated, emerging youth leaders and their mentors who make up the final ten *OurEcho Challenge* teams,” said EarthEcho International founder Philippe Cousteau, Jr. “Their projects represent the hope and ingenuity of a generation who are working to protect and restore the natural resources we depend on for every aspect of a healthy and sustainable society. We can’t wait to see their final presentations.”

The *OurEcho Challenge* equips U.S. middle school students, guided by an educator or mentor, to tackle the decline in biodiversity by identifying threats and proposing solutions to affect natural resources at a community level. These finalist teams receive a stipend to develop their prototypes and final presentations before competing for three project grants, ranging from \$2,000 to \$10,000, to turn their ideas into reality. Entries will be presented virtually to an esteemed panel of judges in August as part of EarthEcho’s 5th annual Youth Leadership Summit. Follow the [link](#) to see the teams’ responses to hearing they made the final ten!

Selected from applicants nationwide, the final ten teams represent a range of issues and potential solutions:

- Team Super Plants; Proof School; San Francisco, CA
- Team Prairie Protectors; Bednarcik Junior High School; Aurora, IL
- Team Pollinator Paper; Bednarcik Junior High School; Aurora, IL
- Team Aquabotics; Bednarcik Jr. High School; Aurora, IL
- Team Swamp Stompers; Coventry Middle School; Akron, OH
- Team International Bird Hotel Developers; Brooks Middle School; Oak Park, IL
- Team Invasive Ivy Squad; Montessori Children's House; Redmond, WA

- Plastic Free NC's Green Team; Love A Sea Turtle; Winterville, NC
- Team Crayfish; Medea Creek Middle School; Oak Park, CA
- Team California Native Bees; Medea Creek Middle School; Oak Park, CA

For more information about the teams and their projects, please go to <https://www.earthecho.org/ourecho-challenge>.

Why Biodiversity?

The future of our planet depends on healthy ecosystems with thriving and diverse wildlife populations. Finding a balance that supports biodiversity as human populations continue to grow is critical in creating a sustainable future. Recent studies underscore the need for innovative solutions and action now:

- 1 million animal and plant species are at risk of extinction.
- 75% of the land environment and some 66% of the marine environment have been “significantly altered by human actions.”
- Up to \$577 billion in annual global crops are at risk from pollinator loss.
- Since 1970, 50% of the world's wildlife has vanished, including 3 billion birds in North America alone.

**Sources: 2019 United Nations Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment, 2016 World Wildlife Fund Living Planet Report, and 2019 AAAS report led by Cornell Lab of Ornithology)*

For more information and updates about the *OurEcho Challenge*, visit www.OurEchoChallenge.org or follow us on

Facebook: www.facebook.com/earthecho Twitter: www.twitter.com/earthecho and Instagram: www.instagram.com/earthecho/.

*For more information about **EarthEcho International**, visit www.earthecho.org.*

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