

CONSERVATION POSTER CONTEST

2025-2026 HANDBOOK

"We All Live in a Watershed"

Everything teachers and students need to know
for a successful poster contest!



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Contest Overview

2025-2026 Theme: "We All Live in a Watershed"

WHO?

3rd, 4th, and 5th graders in Wake County!
Open to all public, private, charter, and homeschool students, and clubs

WHAT?

Create an *informative* and *artistic* poster showing what watersheds are, why they are important, and how we can protect them!

WHEN?

November 3 rd , 2025	Registration deadline
December 3 rd , 2025	Poster submission deadline
December 10 th , 2025	Wake District Judging
Spring 2026	Regional & State Contests



WHY?

- ★ Fun way for kids to combine art and science!
- ★ Supports NC Science and Visual Arts standards
- ★ Prize money for winning!

HOW?

- 1** Teachers - Sign your classes up through the registration form by **Nov. 3rd**.
- 2** Students - Do research on the topic and create your poster using the provided resources and rules in this handbook.
- 3** Teachers - Select the best poster from each class.

Arrange for Wake SWCD staff to pick up your posters by Wednesday, **Dec. 3rd**. District judging will be on Dec. 10th.

Prizes!

District	Regional	State
<ul style="list-style-type: none">All submitted posters receive a ribbonTop 10 posters in each grade level receive a framed certificate1st place: \$50, 2nd place: \$25 (for each grade level)	1st place: \$100	1st place: \$200 2nd place: \$100

Poster Topic

Your poster should teach someone about watersheds – specifically, the information from the questions below. Use the provided study guide and web resources below to do research for your poster.

1

What is a watershed, and what are its different parts?

2

Why are healthy watersheds important?

3

What are the main threats to our local watersheds?

4

How do we keep watersheds healthy?



Learning Resources

Use the [Printable Study Guide](#) as your main source of information, and *explore more* using the web sources below!



Interactives

- [Interactive Lesson - Thinkport.org](#)
- [NC DEQ - River Basins Story Map](#)
- [Runoff Simulation - Model My Watershed](#)
- [Activity: Making a Watershed Model](#)

Videos

- [PBS Clip - Watershed Management: Ways of Watersheds](#)
- [YouTube Video - Intro to Watersheds - For Kids](#)

Articles

- [NCSU - What is a Watershed?](#)
- [Neuse River - AmericanRivers.org](#)

Standards Correlations

Below are the strongest correlations with the poster contest project, but many other standards in these subject areas could be addressed as well!

	NC Science Standards (2023)	NC Visual Arts Standards
3rd Grade	<p>ESS.3.2 Understand the structures of the Earth's surface using models.</p>	<p>3.V.1.4 Understand characteristics of the Elements of Art, including lines, shapes, colors, textures, form, space, and value.</p> <p>3.V.1.5 Understand characteristics of the Principles of Design, including repetition, movement, emphasis, contrast, balance, proportion, harmony, and unity.</p> <p>3.V.2.1 Create art through a process that includes generating ideas, planning solutions, and producing original art.</p> <p>3.V.3.2 Use a variety of media with refined skills.</p> <p>3.CX.2.2 Understand how to use information learned in other disciplines, such as math, science, language arts, social studies, and other arts in visual arts.</p>
4th Grade	<p>ESS.4.2.3 Use models to explain changes in Earth's surface over time (to include slow changes of erosion and weathering, and fast changes of earthquakes, landslides, and volcanic activity).</p> <p>ESS.4.3 Understand changes caused by human impact on the environment.</p> <p>LS.4.1 Understand the effects of environmental changes, adaptations, and behaviors that enable organisms to survive in changing habitats.</p>	<p>4.V.1.5 Understand how the Principles of Design work in relation to each other.</p> <p>4.V.2.2 Use ideas and imagery from North Carolina as sources for creating art</p> <p>4.CX.2.2 Apply skills and concepts learned in other disciplines, such as math, science, language arts, social studies, and other arts, in the visual arts.</p>
5th Grade	<p>LS.5.2 Understand the interdependence of plants and animals within their ecosystem.</p>	<p>5.V.3.1 Evaluate how to manipulate tools safely and appropriately to reach desired outcomes.</p> <p>5.V.3.2 Use appropriate media for the creation of original art.</p> <p>5.CX.2.2 Exemplify how information and skills learned in art can be applied in other disciplines.</p>

Official Rules

1 Individual Project!

Each poster should be the work of ONE student (no group work).



2 Poster Size:

Smallest poster size: 22 x 28 inches
Largest poster size: 24 x 36 inches



3 2-D Materials:

Pictures or other materials may be mounted on the posters, if they won't fall off.

Mounted materials may not stick out more than 1/8 of an inch from the paper.



4 Name on Back:

Posters must have the name card taped/glued to the back (print out the card on page 8 and cut out).

The student's name should NOT be on the front of the poster.



5 Don't Roll It!

Posters should be submitted flat and not rolled.



Posters must be the original work of the student.
Read the copyright section below!



What is Copyright?

Have you ever had a great idea, and someone else shared it as if they came up with it? Or copied something that you made?

They stole your idea!

Copyright is a way to protect ideas and artwork so that other people can't steal them and get false credit by claiming it was theirs.

It's important to make sure that with all of your school projects, you either **say** where you got an idea or image from, or make sure that you come up with it **yourself**.

**** For the poster contest, don't use pictures, cartoon characters, or phrases that you didn't come up with yourself. The judges will take off points if they see that you copied from someone else! ****

Note: All posters entered into District sponsored competition become the property of the respective District. These entities are entitled to use these posters for promotion of the Conservation District program. However, posters will be returned at the end of the contest if requested!

Helpful Tips!

Check out this video showing ways to make a creative poster!



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHXidlH-dBw>

Step 1:

Find the important information.

Step 2:

Take notes on the main points you want to include.

Step 3:

Group the information into sections.

Step 4:

Choose your materials.

Step 5:

Create your poster!

DOs...



1. Make sure your poster answers the 4 research questions! (page 4)
2. Use the conservation vocabulary words from the study guide and show you understand them!
3. Put **effort** into making your poster **neat, colorful, and organized**. Use correct grammar and spelling.
4. Make it colorful and creative! You can use paint, colored pencil, markers, and photos you have taken. Pastels are not recommended since posters will be stacked and moved.
5. Read the rubric (page 9). Practice scoring your poster as if you were a judge! (Ask a parent or teacher to help you if needed.)
6. Fill out the name card with the help of a parent and your teacher, and glue/tape it to the **BACK** of your poster. Please **DO NOT** put your name anywhere on the front of the poster.

DON'Ts...



1. Don't write so small that it's hard to read.
2. Don't add too much information that's scattered around randomly.
3. Don't put materials on that will fall off easily or get stuck/rub off on other posters.
4. Don't use characters or ideas that you didn't come up with. Judges can tell!
5. Don't let your parents or a teacher do it for you. They can help you get the materials and stay on-track with getting your poster done in time, but **YOU** must create your poster yourself!

Name Card

Print this page, fill out the card with a parent and your teacher, then cut and glue/tape the card to the **BACK** of your poster. This is **REQUIRED** for all posters submitted to Wake SWCD.

* Note, this card is only needed for the **posters that are selected to be submitted for the Wake SWCD poster contest**, not for the class's contest. *



NAME CARD

2025-2026 Conservation Poster Contest: "We All Live in a Watershed"



WAKE SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

School: _____

Student Name (first and last):

Grade (circle): 3 4 5

Teacher Name and Email:

Media Permission (for parent):

I agree that images of the student and their poster, as well as the student's name, grade level, and school, may be shared on Wake County's website and social media posts to celebrate their success.

Yes

No

Rubric

Below is the same rubric that the judges will use at the district, regional, and state competitions. Try scoring your poster using the rubric!

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Points</u>
<p>Conservation Message Message shows clear understanding of why this natural resource is important & explains how people can & should conserve this natural resource.</p>	50 points
<p>Visual Effectiveness Readability (use of white space, type choice, neatness); originality; effect on audience (which poster will you remember next year?)</p>	25 points
<p>Universal Appeal Is your poster easily understood by the general population?</p>	10 points
<p>Originality Entry expresses the contest theme in a fresh, inventive, or novel way of using independent thought and creative imagination, and using the unexpected to full advantage.</p>	10 points
<p>Hand-drawn Elements Shows good skill with original hand drawn elements.</p>	5 points
<p>INFRACTION 1 - Violates Copyright Student copied images or text.</p>	-5 points
<p>INFRACTION 2 - Exceeds Size Limit Poster is larger than 24" x 36".</p>	-5 points
Total:	_____ / 100 points

Judging & Awards

Wake SWCD staff will select the top 10 posters from each grade level to be judged by a panel of 5 judges from a variety of backgrounds in watershed management, bioengineering, visual arts, and design.



The Wake SWCD Board of Supervisors will make the final selection of the 1st and 2nd place winners for each grade level using the rubric in this handbook.



(1st place winners of the Wake District contest will go to the regional competition in March 2026)



Winners of Wake District contest will be announced to teachers via email in early December.

Wake SWCD staff will visit the schools of the 1st place winners to present the cash awards and take photos with the students and their posters. Winners will be featured in Wake County newsletter and social media posts, and will be part of our Annual Awards video in December!

AWARDS:

All submitted posters receive a ribbon.



The Top 10 posters in each grade level receive a framed certificate.



For each grade level:

1st place receives a cash prize of \$50

2nd place receives a cash prize of \$25



Prize money is generously donated by:

novonosis

Last Year's Winners!

1st and 2nd place winners from the 2024-2025 Conservation Poster Contest, "Wetlands are Wonderful"

1st Place Winners



3rd Grade
Ashleigh Wuchter,
Adams Elementary



4th Grade
Deetya Parimi,
Highcroft Drive Elementary



5th Grade
Asher Deepak,
Green Hope Elementary

2nd Place Winners



4th Grade
Griffin Gray,
Abbotts Creek Elementary



5th Grade
Shruti Kesav,
Fuller Magnet Elementary

Background on the Poster Contest

The conservation poster contest is an educational contest sponsored by the [North Carolina Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts](#) and the [Division of Soil and Water Conservation](#) (under the NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services). The poster contest is one of several educational contests that Soil and Water Conservation Districts across North Carolina offer. Districts have the option to offer the essay, computer designed slideshow, and public speaking contests, which all follow the conservation theme for that year.

The themes follow a 5-year rotation:

2024-2025 "Wetlands are Wonderful"

2025-2026 "We All Live in a Watershed"

2026-2027 "Soil and Water...Yours for Life"

2027-2028 "Water...the Cycle of Life"

2028-2029 "The Living Soil"

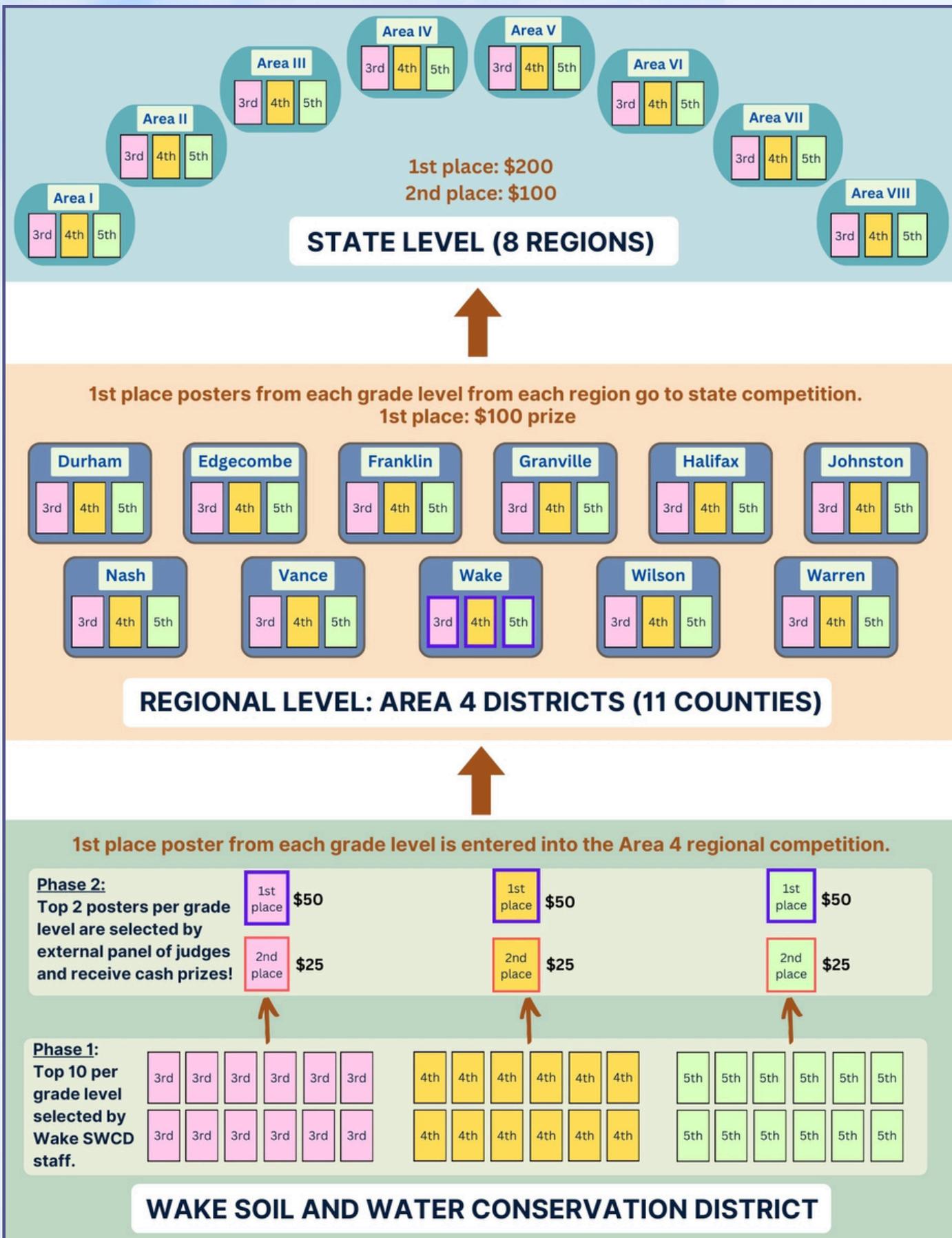
The annual Conservation Poster Contest in Wake County has a long history – it's been going since the 1980s! The contest has a lasting impact on the students who participate; many now-adults remember fondly how hard they worked on their poster and have a sense of pride in it, even if they didn't win. It's a great way for students to do a deep dive into a topic and make their learning their own!



Retired Wake SWCD Environmental Educator Sheila Jones with a poster contest winner.

Poster Contest Big-Picture

(Read from bottom to top)



REGISTRATION & CONTACT

Ready to sign your class up?
Fill out the registration form linked here:

[Wake SWCD 2025-2026 Poster Contest](#)

Check our website for updates!
wake.gov/postercontest



CONTACT

If you have any questions, please reach out to:

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